Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Place: Exile, History, and the Climate Crisis

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Lucy Benjamin, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: 

Date: 28th May 2021

Abstract

In this thesis I argue for a renewed consideration of the climate crisis. In order to do this, I develop the formulation 'earth-world-history,' which I understand to be the locus of this crisis. Emerging from a clarification of Martin Heidegger and Hannah Arendt writings on the temporality of place and the 'placedness' of temporality – understood principally in terms of events occurring *in* history – earth-world-history serves as my entry into the environmental thinking of both scholars. Further clarifying the ontological implications of earth-world-history, I offer a reading of Arendt's twofold political conditions, natality and plurality, as conditioned by this constellation. By radically extending Arendt's political vocabulary in this way, in part by exposing the 'earthliness' of natality and plurality, I uncover the latent concern for an 'earthly politics' in her writing. Turning to another of Arendt's interlocutors, Walter Benjamin, I 'operationalise' this claim via a critical rereading of the climate crisis's history. Recasting Benjamin's historically oppressed as those 'exiled' by history, a formulation that captures the 'placedness' of temporality, I argue for the recognition of an exilic force which exists not only in relation to the history of the climate crisis but increasingly encroaches into the future. Finding a politics to overcome this exilic future I return to the notion of natality, recalling its emergence from earth-world-history as pivotal to its capacity to redeem a new future in spite of a violent past.

This thesis is, to the best of my knowledge, the first to position Arendt as an environmental scholar. And yet, it is not only Arendt or the dialogue she sustains with Heidegger and Benjamin that informs my thinking. Reflecting the plurality implicated by the climate crisis, I incorporate a plurality of voices to unpack, clarify and ultimately illuminate this singular historical phenomenon.

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Abbreviations

For full bibliographic reference see bibliography. All additional texts used by the following authors have been cited in footnotes using the author-date system.

Work by Hannah Arendt

BPF *Between Past and Future*

EJ *Eichmann in Jerusalem*

EU *Essays in Understanding*

HC *The Human Condition*

JW *The Jewish Writings*

LMT *The Life of the Mind: Thinking*

LMW *The Life of the Mind: Willing*

LSA *Love and Saint Augustine*

MDT *Men in Dark Times*

OT *The Origins of Totalitarianism*

PP *The Promise of Politics*

RJ *Responsibility and Judgment*

Works by Walter Benjamin

AP *The Arcades Project*

OGTD *The Origins of the German Tragic Drama*

SW1 *Selected Writings: Volume 1*

SW3 *Selected Writings: Volume 3*

SW4 *Selected Writings: Volume 4*

Works by Martin Heidegger

BT *Being and Time*

PLT *Political, Language, Thought*

QCT *Question Concerning Technology*

WCT *What is Called Thinking?*

Works by other authors

CBR *Critique of Black Reason,* Achille Mbembe

ICR *Inclinations: A Critique of Rectitude,* Adriana Cavarero

Introduction: Locating the Climate Crisis

To claim today that the climate crisis is a political crisis does not require extensive argumentation. That this crisis precedes, exacerbates and prolongs so many other crises that read as 'political' in a more immediate sense – amongst the more extreme, war, famine, pandemics, and forced migration – ought to provoke engagement with the climate crisis as *the* crisis of the 21st century.[1] Framed in this way, as the experience that exerts a conditioning claim on all other experiences and hence on politics more generally, the climate crisis can be read as the vantage point from which the human condition must now be viewed.[2] It was Hannah Arendt who anticipated the need to assume such a vantage point, offering the directive in the prologue to *The Human Condition* that politics cannot be thought apart from the historical conditions of its appearance. Her claim then, that 'our newest experiences and most recent fears' must be claimed as the vantage point for surveying the human condition serves as a prescient invocation of how to approach the climate crisis today. The central claim of this project is thus that it is this experience of unearthly planetary change and political crisis with which we must contend if the human condition is not to become a source of alienation.

That the experience of the climate crisis can be further determined as belonging to the geological epoch of the 'Anthropocene,' the declaration of which attempts to specify our historical condition while simultaneously rendering it alien, other, and unknown, only further ignites the need to assume this moment of living under the climate crisis as our political vantage point – our 'newest experience' from which to survey the world.[3] Taking up this position, in this project I endeavour to

[1] On the paralysis of political institutions responding to the climate crisis, see; Johl and Duyck, 2012. On forced migration and climate refugees see; Ahmed, 2018; Bayes 2018; Fornalé and Doebbler, 2017; UNHCR, *Frequently asked questions on climate change and disaster displacement,* 2016; Sheller, 2018: 137-158; Vaha 2015. On the zoonotic origins of pandemics like COVID-19 as linked to the climate crisis, see; United Nations Environment Programme and International Livestock Research Institute (2020). Preventing the Next Pandemic: Zoonotic diseases and how to break the chain of transmission. Nairobi, Kenya. On the link between livestock and the climate crisis more generally see; Oppenlander, 2013; Malm, 2020. On understanding climate change as an 'emergency' see; Gilding, 2019.

[2] A similar injunction is explicit in claims such as those made by Naomi Klein that, 'this changes everything,' (Klein, 2015). A similar declaration can be heard in the cry of child activist Greta Thunberg that 'the house is one fire' (Thunberg, 2019). On the absent authority to which these movements appeal see; Ricciardone, 2019.

[3] On the origins of the Anthropocene see; Bonneuil and Frezzos, 2017; Davis, 2008; Lewis and Maslin, 2018. On the geological status of humans, see; Wood, 2019.

expose the climate crisis not simply as crisis but as *the* crisis condition of life on earth today. While much debate still surrounds the exact meaning of the Anthropocene, not least as a geologically identifiable epoch, but in terms of its relation to questions of accountability surrounding the climate crisis, which might be considered its most apparent 'symptom,' in this project I argue that Arendt's work is instrumental to the task of understanding its appearance. Accepting as given then that the climate is changing and that these changes are symptomatic of broader shifts in the planet away from an epoch of relative stability (the Holocene) to one that is marked by its anthropogenic mutations (the Anthropocene), my aim in this project is to think the implications of this experience through an Arendtian lens.[4]

Though the Anthropocene and its more acute manifestation in the violence of the climate crisis are not exclusively environmental problems, and nor ought they be engaged only within the field of earth sciences, questions of the environment cannot be separated from their consideration. While the climate crisis is most apparent in terms of extreme weather and climatic instability and hence as invoking a clear image of the earth, I endeavour to show throughout this project that *all* questions of political action and crises of the political have a direct relation to the earth insofar as the earth is, as Arendt tells us, the 'quintessence' of the human condition.[5] Continuously recalling what might thus be called the 'earthliness' of political action and its necessary 'placedness' on the earth is one of the organising claims of this thesis. And so, while Arendt's work did not directly theorize the environment and though the references to the earth that do occur in her work are largely underdeveloped – both by her and others engaging her work – I nevertheless contend that insofar as her project responded to the imperative to 'think what we are doing' it can be figured as an engagement with the earthly placedness of 'our doing.'[6] Complicating the content of this 'doing' will be a recurrent problem in this project, one that emerges firstly in relation to Martin Heidegger's

[4] On the politics of dating the Anthropocene and distinguishing it from the Holocene, see; Davis, 2008; Davis and Todd, 2017.
[5] HC: 2.
[6] On Arendt and the environment, see: Chapman, 2007; Hamilton, 2015; Hargis, 2016; Hyvönen, 2020; Ott, 2009; Voice, 2013; Whiteside, 1998. For site-specific applications of Arendt's theory see: Hyvönen, 2017; Pang, 2016; Simon, 2020.

'doing' of dwelling, before turning more closely to Arendt's writing and the 'doing' quality of her political condition of human natality.[7]

In saying that Arendt's engagement with the environment constitutes an underdeveloped area in her work I do not mean to diminish the explicit references to the earth that do punctuate her writings. Indeed, I take her claim in *The Life of the Mind,* that 'plurality is the law of the earth' as a pivotal moment in her writing that crystallises her earlier invocations of the earth and marks it as central to her considerations of political action.[8] Nevertheless, that Arendt did not view herself nor has she come to be seen as environmental thinker suggest that even her more explicit invocations of the earth are yet to be accorded significance within either Arendt scholarship or environmental theory. In spite of this relative neglect each of Arendt's major political works either begin or end with images of the earth; the preface to *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) appeals for a new understanding of 'human dignity on earth'; the extended essay 'Introduction *into* Politics' (1954) opens with the claim that 'politics is based on the fact that humans are an earthly product'; *The Human Condition* (1958) begins with a reflection on space travel and ends with a discussion of earth alienation; the second essay of *Between Past and Future* (1961) opens with a discussion on 'History and Nature' and concludes with an inquiry into human status in the space age; in her account of Adolf Eichmann's trial in 1963 she described the Nazi party as having deemed itself 'ordained to reorder the conditions for earthly appearance;' and, finally, as already noted, in *The Life of the Mind* (1978) she directly invoked the earth as harbouring the law of plurality.[9] With these moments in mind, I argue throughout this project that despite the relative absence of Arendtian environmental theory, a rich and sustained inquiry into the earthliness of both the human condition and of politics can be traced throughout her work.

Where Arendt's work is taken up within the context of the climate crisis, these dialogues are principally sustained by the growing recognition of its ineliminability and its political implications. In other words, she is continually read as a political theorist rather than an environmental theorist.

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[7] 'Dwelling' is a recurrent topic in Heidegger's writing, in the context of this project I develop an account of dwelling from his 1954 essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking,' see; Harman, 2009; Rose, 2012.
[8] LMT: 19.
[9] OT: xi; PP: 93; HC: 1-6, 257-268; BPF: 41-63, 260-274; EJ: 279; LMT: 19.

Following Arendt's decisive diagnosis of the human condition into its three constitutive parts – labour, work, and action – many pursuing Arendtian readings of the environment have built on precisely this framework.[10] Kerry Whiteside's argument regarding the failure to judge the world in ecological terms is connected to a preceding failure to engage the 'rise of the social,' a political trend that Arendt identified in the crossover of labour and work, a perversion that saw the meaning of political action erode and consumerism rise.[11] Ari-Elmeri Hyvönen presents a similar reading, arguing here for the hybrid labour-as-action, a locus of activity that unleashes the unpredictability of action into the biological web of life which traditionally corresponds to the activity of labour.[12] Like Whiteside, Hyvönen's reading cannot be separated from a discussion on labour and consumption, yet his argument is distinguished for its critique of the agent of labour. His claim then, that the collectively organised labour process 'has taken the shape of action *minus* plurality' is countered with an appeal to restructure collective existence and recover the diversity of human plurality.[13] Scott Hamilton and Anne Chapman share these concerns for action, both claiming that the unpredictable force of Arendtian political action is diminished by something like the calculative and capitalistic framework of resource extraction.[14] This distortion of value as an attribute of nature, namely, of applying a profit-engineered framework to the environment reappears in Paul Ott's discussion of the insufficient attention paid to human-nature relationships.[15] The destructive consequences of this form of largely unconstrained consumption is read through an Arendtian lens by Paul Voice who turns towards Arendt's account of the self and deliberative justice as a potential remedy.[16] Jill Hargis develops a similar appeal, countering growing sentiments of world alienation with a return to plurality where deliberative and democratic judgment might reposition individuals as responsible for the world.[17]

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[10] Arendt introduced this framework in *The Human Condition* however, she also provided a concise summary of her threefold division of action in the paper 'Labour, Work, Action' (see; Arendt, 2018: 291-307).
[11] Whiteside, 1998. On the rise of the social, see; Luttrell, 2015; Pitkin, 1998; Ring, 1989; Zakin, 2015.
[12] Hyvönen, 2020.
[13] ibid: 258.
[14] Chapman: 2007; Hamilton, 2015.
[15] Ott: 2009.
[16] Voice: 2013.
[17] Hargis: 2016. Though not directly connected to questions of ecology, Linda Zerilli's work pursues a similar argument, heralding an Arendtian and democratic form of judgment as a remedy to growing alienation and political violence, see Zerilli, 2016.

The general themes of these Arendtian interpretations of the climate crisis, while reflective of the broad scope of Arendt's political theory, all share in common their positioning of Arendt *after* the crisis. What thus becomes apparent in these readings is the *applicability* of Arendt to the climate crisis.[18] Departing from this trend, this project sits alone in its claim that Arendt is an environmental thinker, and thus one for whom politics is always already an environmental concern. Without denying the political dimension of the climate crisis then, in this project I develop an account of Arendt's environmental politics that effectively *precedes* the political violence of the crisis. The scope of argumentation to which this position gives rise enables me to pursue avenues unexplored by others. Indeed, rather than 'apply' Arendt's political theory to what is already considered a political crisis in its own right, my claim regarding Arendt's latent interrogation of human earthliness gives new texture to her writings on human rights (Chapter Three) and the project of politics (Chapter Six). In as much as this study thus engages the climate crisis and its political implications through an Arendtian lens, it also points to the many instances in Arendt's writing – like those already noted in reference to the earth – that point towards something like the latent environmentalism of her political theory. Uncovering this arc in her writing and allowing for her reflections on natality, rights, history and politics to be coloured by its force, enables me to position Arendt within a school of environmental theorists without the need to continually justify this placement. That being said, as I reflect on the far-reaching implications of the climate crisis, I move as much outside this canon as I do inside, bringing Arendt's environmentalism into dialogue with critical race theorists and decolonial theory.[19]

Coordinating what is initially an environmental exegesis of Arendt's writing is a methodological framework that I establish in relation to two of Arendt's contemporaries: Martin Heidegger and Walter Benjamin. And yet even here, my engagement with Heidegger and Benjamin is marked by the guiding presence of others; principally, James Baldwin, Saidiya Hartman, Achille

[18] For 'earth-less' accounts of topics that intersect the wordliness of politics (but not the earthliness of that world) see: worlds in theories of judgement, see for example Biskowski, 1993; Zerilli, 2016; worlds and human rights, see; Klein, 2014; Parekh, 2004; phenomenology and the world, see; Borren, 2013; world and education, see; Gordon, 2001.

[19] The intersection between the Anthropocene and decolonialism is already well noted and will emerge as a central topic of concern in Chapter Five, see also; Chakrabarty, 2012; Davis and Todd, 2017; Lewis and Maslin, 2018, Weizman and Sheikh, 2015.

Mbembe, Christina Sharpe, and Kathryn Yusoff, whose claims to history, politics, and something like what I will call 'appearance-in-place' give weight to my argument.[20] Building on the critical force that is garnered in the arguments that I develop by bringing these thinkers together allows me to highlight the illuminating potential of Arendt's environmental thought. Namely, rather than simply ask questions regarding the force that specific instances of Arendt's work on the question of earth and placedness might have in responding to the political implications of the climate crisis, I work to establish a constellation of ideas in which Arendt's environmentalism becomes forceful insofar as it allows for these ideas to sustain productive and illuminating dialogue.

Central to the development of Arendt's thinking in this way is the introduction of my own constellation in which to situate an analysis of the climate crisis. Drawn from my reading of the common schematic around which Heidegger and Arendt develop accounts of existential and political 'placedness,' I introduce the formulation of 'earth-world-history,' a triadic constellation that serves both as a methodological tool in approaching the vast and complex secondary literature on the climate crisis *and* as a conceptual tool in which to think the appearance of the climate crisis.[21] My entry into the climate crisis via this threefold analytic enables me to nuance claims regarding the 'material' (earthly) and 'political' (worldly-historical) consequences of the crisis. And so, rather than perpetuate classifications of the climate crisis as either 'earthly' or 'worldly,' I will use the formulation earth-world-history as a way of challenging precisely this separation, arguing in line with my earlier discussion of the crisis that the climate crisis is simultaneously a crisis of earth, world, and history. Highlighting the way in which all political worlds not only appear 'on' earth but as conditioned and intrinsically related to the earth, and hence marked by an enduring 'earthliness,' the significance of earth-world-history is that it creates that critical space in which to think the intersecting and overlapping forces that coordinate the climate crisis. Establishing the exact meaning of earth-world-

[20] My project gains immensely from the work of Baldwin, 1963, 1972, 2017; Hartman, 1997, 2007, 2019; Mbembe, 2017, 2019; Sharpe, 2016; Yusoff, 2018. In turn, the specific historical zones of Nazi oppression and Israeli and Australian statehood reappear as moments of historic violence demanding reconsideration and critique.

[21] Although I make this connection between Arendt and Heidegger's work, namely, as sharing a common affinity regarding the placedness of experience, my intention is not to position Arendt's work as derivative of Heidegger's, but rather to highlight the way her writing clarifies and extends themes from his work. On the common affinities in their writing see, Villa, 1996: 113-130.

history, both as a methodological tool which draws on Walter Benjamin's conceptualisation of the constellation in his early work and his later reflections on the agonistic ontology of history made fraught by fragmentary moments of disruption, *and* as a conceptual tool in which the climate crisis appears, forms Part I of this project.

The notion of a constellation can be traced throughout Benjamin's writing, from his 1928 publication *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* through to his final essays on the question of history (perhaps most importantly for the current project the 1940 essay 'On the Concept of History').[22] Though his early engagements with constellations as a form of epistemic critique, an aspect of the constellation on which Susan Buck-Morss has offered much clarification, do continue to inform his later writings, my approach to the notion of a constellation is largely coordinated in terms of its use as a tool for historical critique.[23] In light of this, it is accounts of the constellation such as those provided by Max Pensky as the 'radically new *method* for the conduct of a new mode of critical materialist historiography,' that I rely on throughout this project.[24] Though Benjamin's earlier engagements with structures of Kantian epistemology are latent to this discussion of history's asynchronous appearance and the necessity to think knowledge and the state of politics in view of those disruptive moments in which 'the law of dialectics [are] at a standstill,' I want to emphasise the role constellations play in the disclosure of historical beginnings.[25] Indeed, it is this intersection of beginnings and place, or rather the exposure of beginnings as always occurring *in place* and of place appearing *in time* that will give weight to the particular constellation of earth-world-history.

Further clarifying the force of the constellation's irreducible intersection, Natalia Baeza writes that 'the construction of a constellation requires the capacity not only to recognize non-representational similarities and draw correspondences, but also mimetically to reproduce the experiential content inscribed in the object in a new act of creative repetition.'[26] Coinciding with this act of 'creative repetition' or the opening up of what lay repressed or sedimented in a constellation is

[22] See OGTD, SW4: 398-400.
[23] Buck-Morss, 1977; see; Krauß, 2011; Ross, 2020; Tagliacozzo, 2018
[24] Pensky, 2014: 179. For an overview of the way in which 'constellations' provided a methodological function in Benjamin's writing see; Krauß, 2011; Ross, 2020; Tagliacozzo, 2018.
[25] AP: 10.
[26] Baeza, 2015: 40.

the eliminability of the categorical divisions of history. What is then meant by 'history' as contingent to the broader constellation earth-world-history is distinct to the categorisation of time into 'past,' 'present,' and 'future.' What emerges instead is the unified phenomena of temporality in which past, present, and future are drawn together in a mutual constitution in considerations of existential meaning and experience. Mirroring this rejection of categorical specificity, Pensky escapes the use of a hierarchical categorisation system by invoking a Heideggerian language of disclosure. What thus appears for Pensky in the context of constellations is the intersecting flows that coordinate appearance as such. He writes:

> the constellation emerges – discloses itself – only insofar as the concept divests the particulars of their status as *merely* particular, refers them to their hidden arrangement, it also preserves their material existence. At that point, a meaningful image jumps forward from the previously disparate elements, which from that point onward can never be seen as merely disparate again. In this way, the phenomena are resecured from their status as phenomenal or fragmentary, without simultaneously sacrificing the phenomena in the name of an abstract concept.[27]

Pensky stresses that what is brought into being in a constellation cannot be undone and yet neither does this diminish ontological specificity. In place, phenomena become meaningful at a point of intersection, brought into a common affinity that allows the depth of a constellation to come into view.

Rather than identify a set of coordinating conditions then, which may persist as divisible entities, Pensky reminds us that a constellation designates that which jumps forward as having a coherency of its own. While an empirical account may therefore endeavour to locate the earth as material ground, the world as a space of artificial construction, and history as a narrative that develops from without, earth-world-history is distinct as that constellation out of which the experience of

[27] Pensky, 1993: 70.

being's placedness assumes meaning. Persisting within the empirical division of that space into earth, world, and history as distinct existential entities, whilst as plausible as locating in the skies mere instances of starry singularity, the constellation both literal and as earth-world-history announces an 'irrevocable shift in the perception of phenomena which preserves both their individual integrity and their mutuality.'[28] That is to say, whilst the individuality of earth, world, and history may endure, the force of their meaning as located in the surplus of mere materiality corresponds to their co-belonging in the earth-world-history constellation.

What I take from Benjamin's claim that 'ideas are eternal constellations and in grasping the elements in such constellations, the phenomena are divided up [via concepts] and redeemed at the same time,' is an indication of how to think the intersecting forces that constitute the placedness of human experience.[29] The simultaneity of Benjamin's constellation, as that which comes into being – i.e., is redeemed – as it defies the grips of a totalising essentialism, will be central to overarching claim of this project that human placedness can only be thought so long as it is continually enacted. The notion of a constellation thus captures two general features that emerge in engagements with the climate crisis. The first is the inextricable co-being of earth, world, and history, where invocations of the 'earth' immediately invoke world and history and vice versa. Where this then leads is not to the hierarchical unfolding of earth, then world, then history, but the temporal immediacy of the three, hence the co-being and co-production of earth-world-history, the hyphen here signalling the ontological fabric knitting each together. Redemption of the singular coincides with redemption of the three, and yet, as a constellation, this moment escapes the grip of totality – continually revealing new meanings and hence new iterations of what it means to locate existential meaning in earth-world-history. This resistance to a fixed ontology is put into sharper relief in the language of Heidegger's 'concealment' and 'withdrawal' (Chapter One).

The second feature of Benjamin's constellation that coincides with the placedness of earth-world-history is its dependence on those actions that in drawing meaning from their relation to a constellation are also central to its realisation. What appears as an apparent circularity here is clarified

[28] Gilloch, 2002: 70-71.
[29] OGTD*:* 16.

throughout this project as the intersection of action in place and the ontological realisation of place in action. Recognising that the coherency of earth-world-history can never be redeemed from its fraught and antagonistic relationship with the forces that give it meaning and draw meaning from it, part of my discussion of earth-world-history is its irreducibility to a singular origin. Indeed, where I draw on Benjamin's discussion of the origin in *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama* as 'an eddy in the stream of becoming,' I aim to highlight precisely such a process of becoming and disappearing in the co-being of earth-world-history.[30]

Unpacking the force of this co-being is the defining project of Part I. Reading Heidegger and Arendt's discussion of place and the constitutive spaces of earth, world, and history through the notion of a constellation, I aim to establish a shared depiction of human placedness in their writing. Forgoing a purely spatial or physical conception of place, I invoke a historical element of place as intrinsic to the way in which place appears for both Heidegger and Arendt *in* time.[31] This notion of a temporal space is something that I develop from Heidegger's thinking on the relationship between earth and world. In Chapter 1.1, I offer an interpretation of the 'strife' that he describes in his 1936 essay 'On the Origin of the Work of Art,' as the agonistic relationship in which the establishment of worlds 'unconceal' the earth which, in turn resists this exposure by moving towards 'concealment.' Highlighting the tension of this movement as intrinsically temporal, this rereading of earth-world strife leads to a complication of what it means to position the earth primordial to the world.

What thus emerges as a guiding claim in Chapter One is that insofar as the earth (noun) earths (verb) as the world (noun) worlds (verb) a pivotal function is played by this 'as.' Indeed, by complicating this 'as,' which not only brings together earth and world but exposes that relation as fundamentally occurring *in time*, I expose firstly the fraught 'origin' of earth-world which can assume meaning only insofar as it is inextricably bound up with movement and, going on from this point, the impossibility of assigning fixed meaning to either earth, world, or history. What Heidegger refers to

[30] OGTD: 45.
[31] On the historical status of Dasein, Heidegger's central existential analytic, see: BT: 130-135; see; O'Byrne, 2010: 23-30; Withy, 2011. Rather than contribute further to the well-established terrain on the historical dimension of Dasein, in Chapter One I bring Heidegger into dialogue with James Baldwin regarding the historicity of experience and what it means to appear historically.

as a form of 'strife,' namely, the ongoing and agonistic movement of earth and world, is the impossibility of 'fixing' or totalising earth, world, or history. It is precisely the impossibility of this claim to an original organising earth-world origin that leads me towards the constellation earth-world-history, where the hyphen assumes a critical function as the ineliminable yet irreducible link between the three.

In gesturing towards this risk of 'fixing' or 'totalising' the earth I am led to the question of Heidegger's involvement with the Nazi party. It is precisely this sort of reduction of the earth that Heidegger realised in his turn towards Nazism, one that is made explicit in his language of 'blood' and 'soil' and his disavowal of rootlessness as a political experience. Drawing on his work I neither attempt to nor endorse absolving him of his actions in this regard. Where I incorporate themes from his writing on the earthliness of being, I do so in recognition of the fraught position into which this leads me. Indeed, in turning to Heidegger, have I allowed the image of his blood-soaked earth to diminish the emancipatory force that I locate in my own rendering of the earth in earth-world-history? As I continue to advance this project my answer, of course, is no. I want to actively resist the resurrection of those ideals in my account of the earth and earthly dwelling. While implicit here is the view that Heidegger's writing can be read without simultaneously validating that ideology – a position at odds with those like Emmanuel Faye who read Heidegger's work as 'impregnated with Hitlerism' – I am nevertheless aware of the violent history of earthly ontologies.[32] And yet, it is precisely that necessary tension, the need to maintain a reflexivity both with those texts we read and those we *write* – and I use the pronoun 'we' here both as a recognition of reflection already underway by those engaged in the sort of political project I undertake and as an *imperative* to join in reflection – that I argue is made possible by reading Heidegger. And here I am not heralding Heidegger as, in himself, a provocation to think, a form of appellation that would not simply absolve his immorality but somehow fetishize it, rather I am recognising precisely that immorality alongside his ontological inquiry into the meaning of being in order to stay with it and think in its presence.

[32] Faye, 2006: 58.

Exposing the initial contours of earth-world-history in Chapter One, firstly in relation to Heidegger's discussion of earth and world in his 1936 'Artwork' essay and later in relation to his idea of the 'fourfold' (*das Geviert*), in Chapter Two I turn to Arendt's writing.[33] While I see Heidegger's writing on place as providing a schematic that will serve as influential to Arendt's writing and hence as allowing for earth-world-history to be excised from both of their writings, Arendt's work assumes a far more political tone insofar as her reflections on place develop in tandem with her considerations of totalitarianism's 'unearthliness' and the placedness of political action. Arendt's thesis that 'plurality is the law of the earth' serves as an organising point of entry into her considerations of place and the placedness of the human condition.[34] At the same time as I provide an extensive rereading of her work, uncovering its full potential in relation to earth-world-history, I do so in anticipation of the more immediate dialogue that I set up in Part III between her environmentalism and the politics of the climate crisis.

In Part II the force of the formulation earth-world-history is brought into view via a reconsideration of Arendt's political condition of human natality.[35] Following a twofold reading of natality as, on the one hand, a *condition* for political action and, on the other, the *faculty* for action, I develop a nuanced reading of what it means for natality to be conditioned by its appearance from within earth-world-history and, in turn, to renew this constellation via action. Extending the earlier development of earth-world-history, my aim in Part II is to make stark how the constellation informs the conditions for political action and how it appears as the locus of political. In the first half of Part II, I follow a parallel inquiry into natality as a political condition undertaken by Adriana Cavarero.[36] One of the most prominent feminist interpreters of Arendt, Cavarero's project hinges on a reconsideration of the role played by the maternal figure. In part, redress to a tradition of masculine hegemony, Cavarero moves beyond Arendt's original celebration of the miraculous child at natality's

[33] My interpretation of the fourfold is drawn largely from Heidegger's essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking' (PLT: 141-160). For a discussion of the fourfold as it pertains to Heidegger's later writing, see: Mitchell, 2015; Oliver, 2015: 140-149; Young, 1993.
[34] LMT: 19.
[35] For an extended overview of natality's status in Arendt's writing see, Bowen-Moore, 1989; Champlin, 2013; Totsching, 2017.
[36] See ICR; see; Cavarero, 1997; 2011; 2014.

inaugural scene, in order to recentre the maternal figure.[37] Building on this reframing of birth, Cavarero goes on to provide a 'geometrical' reading of birth and develops what she calls a 'postural ethics.'[38]

Privileging relations of 'inclination' in which states of dependence, vulnerability and exposure are central, Cavarero exposes the ethical underbelly of natality, bringing the lived conditions of the birth scene into renewed consideration in such a way that natality's own ethics come into view. Following on from Cavarero's project, my own reread of natality recentres the role of place as that which might yield a similarly fecund reframing of natality's ethical paradigm. Indeed, it is via a recentring of natality's placedness (of being born-in-place rather than Cavarero's born-from-another) that provides the grounds on which I review Arendt's somewhat opaque notion of the 'right to have rights.'[39] Exploring the resonance of being born-in-place in connection to the question of rights, Chapter Three demonstrates how earth-world-history – as the place into which 'we' are born – is central to a consideration of rights. The force of this point becomes clearer still once the violence of the climate crisis over earth-world-history is exposed, such that what the climate crisis is shown to threaten is not only rights in themselves but the very logic on which they depend.

In the second half of Part II (Chapter Four), I move from a discussion of the condition of natality to one regarding the natal faculty. Here my emphasis shifts from a concern with being *born*-in-place, and the structure of rights to which this gives rise, to the question of *being*-in-place. What thus emerges as a central point of contention is the way in which earth-world-history is renewed via action. Recalling my discussion from Chapter One on the way in which the origin serves as an irreducible point in Heidegger's discussion of earth and world, which appear in the agonistic space set up by the 'as' that unites them (earth earths *as* worlds world), this chapter presents a similar inquiry into the temporality of natality. Yet rather than return to Heidegger, my reading of natality advances

[37] For similar 'maternal' readings of natality, see; Guenther, 2008; Söderbäck; 2008; Willard, 2005.
[38] ICR; see; Cavarero, 2011.
[39] This phrase is introduced at the end of a section on 'Imperialism' in *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* a section which begins with a reflection on the inhumanity of colonialism before arguing that it is European Totalitarianism that has demonstrated the impotence of human rights (OT: 388). That the book was written after Arendt had endured 18 years of statelessness is an indication of the centrality place – and the right-to-placedness – will have to her conception of rights. On the question of place and the right to have rights, see: Kesby, 2012; Parekh, 2004.

in dialogue with Benjamin, the second of Arendt's interlocutors in this project. Turning to Benjamin's discussion of what he calls 'weak messianism,' the human faculty, which, in the service of critical historiography is capable of renewing the world by responding to the past, in this chapter I develop a messianic reading of natality.[40] Benjamin's messianism brings the asynchronous appearance of earth-world-history, as that which both precedes natality yet depends on natality for its ongoing renewal, into sharp relief. Positioning the faculty of natality in this way, as exerting a form of messianism in relation to earth-world-history, serves as a way of resisting claims regarding the ontological fixity of earth-world-history. What instead comes to the fore in this consideration of natality is the continual recreation and reconditioning of that original constellation via acts of natality.

Taken together, Parts I and II provide the framework in which to think the appearance of the climate crisis in Part III. Part I makes explicit the 'earthliness' of Heidegger's writing before moving to demonstrate how the Heideggerian themes of strife and unconcealment reappear in an Arendtian iteration of earth-world-history. In turn, Part II seeks to connect Arendt's central political category of human natality to this triadic constellation, showing firstly the way in which the intersection of natality and earth-world-history gives rise to a structure of rights, before showing how natality works against the fossilisation of this constellation (and those rights) by acting as a force of messianic renewal. Returning to the original blurring together of place and time as evinced by the constellation earth-world-history, in Part III I engage the climate crisis directly, via the motif of 'exile.'

My central claim here is that the climate crisis imposes an 'exilic condition' under which the realisation natality, and hence the renewal of earth-world-history, is diminished.[41] Insofar as the exilic condition threatens the earlier reading of natality as giving rise firstly to a structure of rights that coincide with being born-in-place and the renewal of earth-world-history as the realisation of those rights by acts of being-in-place, it undermines each element of earth-world-history and thus cannot be thought as an exclusively spatial concern. With this claim I suggest that to be excluded from the narrative of the present, to exist within the 'voids' of history is to assume an exilic position in the

[40] SW4: 390. On the intersection of natality and messianism see; Biss, 2012; Gottlieb, 2003; Kiess, 2016.
[41] On the status of the exile see, Said, 1979; 1984; 2000.

present, *even while* remaining physically in place.[42] To be an historical exile is thus to exist beyond the fringes of historical appearance, to have been denied a role in the 'storybook of mankind.'[43] Edward Said's reflections on exile and 'disciplinary communications apparatus that denies the exile the 'permission to narrate' are effectively echoed here, in terms of the denial to narrate history and be present.[44] Exemplary of this position is the convergence of Australia Day and Invasion Day or the Palestinian *nakba* and the founding of Israeli statehood.[45] At each of these junctures what first emerges as the physical exile of indigenous bodies culminates in exile from historical narration. Australian scholar Tony Birch thus describes the naming of spaces as the naming of history, the security of which 'evaporates when the hidden history of colonial domination and Indigenous subordination is challenged.'[46] Indeed, my introduction of the exilic condition is made possible via the identification of two exilic forces which I name *History* and *Future.*

Locating an oppressive force in the capitalised spaces of *History* and *Future*, which undermine the claim of individual experience to historical expression (the rights coeval with the natal condition) and hence to the renewal of earth-world-history (the realisation of the natal faculty) is the threat that I locate in the climate crisis. With these ambiguous zones of imprisonment, *History* and *Future*, I mean to identify several things at once; 1) the hegemony of historical structures that overwhelm the present as a space of original historical creation – i.e., which render the present exilic; 2) the extension of exclusionary zones beyond the physical, marking homelessness of the exile as a status occurring 'in time'; 3) the loss of future unpredictability and the colonisation of the present by paradigms of prophetic fate; 4) a complex of social atomization and the erosion of intergenerational links. In contrast to the abstract spaces of 'history' and 'future' which denote spaces in time, *History*

[42] My intention here is not to deny or diminish the ongoing forms of physical exile that indigenous and other communities face in the context of territorial occupation, banishment to underfunded reservations, and limited access to housing but rather to bring into a consideration a new way of thinking exile 'in place,' see; Anderson et al, 2004; Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Nixon, 2011: 103-127, 150-174; Weizman, 2007.
[43] HC: 184.
[44] Said, 1984.
[45] On the convergence of Australia Day and Invasion Day, see for example: Caple and Bednarek, 2020; Darian-Smith, 2017; Nicolapoulos and Vassilacopoulos, 2014. On the convergence of Israeli statehood and the Palestinian *nakba,* see for example: Butler*,* 2012; Klee*,* 2020; Mbembe, 2019: 79-81; Raz-Krakotzkin, 2007, 2013.
[46] Birch, 2003: 150.

and *Future* name those specific historical forces that undermine the potential of human appearance to realise its placedness in earth-world-history.

Countering each of these claims I introduce my own zones of historical resistance which take form in the incomplete spaces of becoming that are '*history*' and '*future.*' Recalling the interruptive force of natality's messianic potential, *history* and *future* resist the totalisation of earth-world-history, embracing in place the fragility of placedness as something that must continually be enacted.[47] Developed in concert with Benjamin's fragmentary narratives of the past, Chapter Five, the first half of Part III aims to establish a narrative of earth-world-history under the climate crisis that is coordinated in dialogue with the past, heralding an asynchronous image of the present that can only belatedly come into view.[48] In turn as I move to engage the exilic threat that assumes form as the *Future,* in Chapter Six, a threat that I further qualify as a threefold threat via an imaginative rereading of the Greek *Moirai,* or goddesses of fate, I invoke a mode of resistance in the *future.* Contrasting these two narratives of time, *History* and *history, Future* and *future,* my intention is to highlight the insidious ways in which the climate crisis operates, i.e., as a crisis that is not reducible to violence that strikes with each extreme and violent blow of the weather but appears in each subtle atrophying of potential under the guise of historical linearity and claims to futural fatalism.[49]

Taken together, the three parts of the thesis aim to introduce a new side of Arendt, namely, as a political theorist who is not a stranger to considerations of the environment nor simply one whose political theory resonates with the unprecedented violence of the climate crisis, but one who is actively invested in exploring the earthly placedness of the human condition. What I introduce by way of the earth-world-history constellation is a new tool for engaging the climate crisis. In turn, earth-world-history makes clear those intersecting forces that are brought into disarray by the exilic

[47] On the need to renew the fragile relationships that connect the present to the future, particularly in the context of planetary destruction, see; Fritsch, 2018; Gardiner, 2006; Jonas, 1979; Mulgan, 2018.
[48] A similar project is undertaken by those seeking to think the 'deep time' of the Anthropocene and the way in which the present intersects with events that 'took place' (and whose effect continue to take place) centuries and millennia ago, see; Gee, 2000; Nixon, 2018; Wood, 2018.
[49] On the need to develop a story that engages the climate crisis, see; Ghosh, 2016; Toadvine, 2017; Weik von Mossner, 2016. A similar problematic is engaged by T. J Demos and Amanda Boetzkes who inquire after the politicization of the climate crisis in visual arts, see; Boetzkes, 2010; Demos, 2012; Davis and Turpin, 2014. On the temporal violence of the climate crisis see Nixon, 2018.

condition, a violence that not only threatens to undo the complex constellation in which we make our homes but the very condition that gives meaning to human action.

Part I

Earth-World-History

Chapter One: Dwelling in place with Heidegger

Engagements with time and place are central to Martin Heidegger's writing. Perhaps the most explicit indication of this is the binding of experience to place, invoked quite literally in the Da- or thereness of Heidegger's central existential analytic Dasein.[1] Heidegger's presentation of the being of being human is not simply intercut with a discussion of place but is shown as qualitatively determined by its ineliminable 'placedness.' Hence, 'Dasein signifies that human beings have a sense of themselves as *there* in the world, a sense of their *there-being.*[2] In his description of the *polis* Heidegger grounds this claim to thereness, writing that the *polis* is 'the site, the there, wherein and as which historical Da-sein is. The πόλις is the historical site *(Geschichtsstiitte),* the there *in* which, *out of* which, and *for which* history happens.'[3] Yet even as he opens up the way in which Dasein relates to the 'thereness' of their political being, he leaves open to reflection the constitution of the *polis,* inviting consideration on the fragile temporality of this place that is held together by 'history.'

Picking up on these themes of temporal placedness, this chapter moves between a discussion of earth, world, and history – those three spaces whose meaningful co-being is the constellation earth-world-history – and the historical experience of coming into place in this constellation. In the first two sections of this chapter, I complicate the status of place in Heidegger's writing, moving past the abstract thereness evinced in *Being and Time's* Dasein and turning instead to his two shorter essays 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (1936) and 'Building Dwelling Thinking' (1954). It is across these two texts that I argue the complex ontology of place (the place of Dasein's placedness) is most clearly articulated. In the final section I turn to the historicity of being, captured in the opening allusion to the fragile temporality of the *polis,* and bring Heidegger into dialogue with more critical accounts of historical placedness, most centrally that of James Baldwin. Throughout this chapter the existential analytic, the earth-world-history constellation, serves as a guiding methodological tool.

[1] It is important to note at the outset that I will adopt the pronoun 'they' in relation to Dasein rather than 'it' to recall the embodied of experience of being in the world and being with others.
[2] Oliver, 2015: 115.
[3] Heidegger, 1959:152.

1.1 On the Origin of earth-world-history

There is a paradoxical simplicity that complicates interpretations of the earth. At once the literal ground of being, the earth is equally that which resists being known. Insofar as an existentially meaningful life is understood to be more than mere biological existence, what the earth *is* cannot be reduced to the conditions for survival that it otherwise so clearly establishes. Distinguished as a locus of immediate, immanent experience, the earth is simultaneously the space in which experience resists interpretation and defies comprehension, revealing the earth as an instance of the sublime and incomprehensible. The earth changes and yet remains the same, it ages and is weathered and yet it remains new and unknown, not only for the cycles of generations who year upon year arrive upon its surface but all of those who continually dwell within it. As the place that precedes any understanding of placedness, that is presupposed in each consideration of place and is present in each instance of assuming presence in place, the earth is both a provocation and a source of certainty. Provocative insofar as it resists being brought under control, certain insofar as it endures all change.

It is this primordiality of the earth that Heidegger takes up in his essay, 'On the Origin of the Work of Art.' Framing his entry into this fraught relationship between the unknowability of the earth and the world that persists in wresting meaning from it, Heidegger begins the essay by turning to an analogous inquiry into the origin of art. He opens the essay as follows:

> The question concerning the origin of the work of art asks about the source of its nature. On the usual view, the work arises out of and by means of the activity of the artists. But by what and whence is the artist what he is? By the work; for to say that the work does credit to the master means that it is the work that first lets the artist emerge as a master of his art. The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other. Nevertheless, neither is the sole support of the other. In themselves and in their interrelations artist and work *are* each of them by virtue of a third thing which is prior to both, namely that which also gives artist and work of art their names – art.[4]

[4] PLT: 17.

While Heidegger's remarks might at first read as setting up nothing more than a complex and esoteric reconsideration of the 'chicken and egg' problem, what he outlines is in fact a critical rethinking of the ontological tension of human experience. Indeed, Heidegger acknowledges the apparent circularity of his argument, noting all the same that 'we are compelled to follow the circle' that has arisen.[5] He further stipulates that 'to enter upon this path is the strength of thought, to continue on it is the feast of thought.'[6] Seemingly recalling Benjamin's original development of the constellation in epistemic terms, namely, as the framework through which to rethink the existence of concepts, Heidegger's paper advances by unpacking the various claims to hermeneutic primacy at play.

At its most simplistic, Heidegger's argument hangs on the fact that art both precedes and yet cannot precede that which assumes the name 'artwork' or qualification 'artist.' Although the same semantic proximity is lost in the move to earth, world, and history, what I want to show is the reappearance of that same fraught ontology in the disclosure of earth, world, and history. And so, before I proceed with an exegesis of Heidegger's essay and his own particular development of an earth-world relation as analogous to the art-artwork relation, I want to requote the opening problematic on the status of the artist and the artwork, substituting Heidegger's initial concepts with those of the earth-world-history constellation. Where Heidegger poses his question in regard to the status of the work, I substitute this notion with the world, in turn, I reconfigure the status of the work-producing artist in terms of those who produce the world, who create and renew it as history, hence the substitution of the 'artist' for the 'historical ones.' Finally, where Heidegger locates that which is prior to artist and artwork in the concept of art itself, I argue that prior to the world and those who produce it is the earth itself. Granting these substitutions, the original text would then read as follows:

> The question concerning the origin of the **world** asks about the source of its nature. On the usual view, the **world** arises out of and by means of the activity of the **(worldly) historical ones**. But by what and whence is the **historical one** what he is? By the **world**; for to say that the **world** does credit to the **historical ones** means that it is the **world** that first lets the

[5] PLT: 18.
[6] Ibid.

> **historical ones** emerge as a master of his **world**. The **historical one** is the origin of the **world**. The **world** is the origin of the **historical one**. Neither is without the other. Nevertheless, neither is the sole support of the other. In themselves and in their interrelations **historical one** and **world** *are* each of them by virtue of a third thing which is prior to both, namely that which also gives **historical one** and **world** of **worlds** their names – **earth**.

In the original essay Heidegger proceeds by asking, 'but can art be an origin at all?' prompting the question here, 'but can earth be an origin at all?' While the latter question lends itself toward a ready answer – the earth is an origin insofar as it is the material ground of being – this answer is problematised once we return to the ontology of the world. If the earth is merely the ground beneath our feet, the trees, rocks and air we breathe, then the earth would have no import regarding the development of worlds. And yet, it is clear that worlds are not merely located on the earth by chance, worlds assume form out of the earth, respond to the earth and become meaningful as earthly locales. Answering the question 'can the earth be an origin at all?' thus precipitates a return to Heidegger's text.

As it pertains to my current analysis into the analogous framings of art-artwork-artist and earth-world-history, Heidegger's answer to the question 'can art be an origin at all' hinges on what he uncovers as refusing disclosure in art.[7] His argument here is coordinated in the tension that is set up between the work which opens up a world by drawing the earth out of concealment and into a form of worldly disclosure and the simultaneous refusal of the earth to be disclosed and thus the fraught project of sustaining the openness of the world. The original provocation then regarding the origin of the art, which refuses to be made reducible to the object quality of the artwork or the practice of the artist, coincides with the refusal of the earth to be 'broken into' and totally exposed. What Heidegger thus outlines in his discussion on the material form of art and the meaning that is disclosed in art as

[7] The essay also includes a threefold critique of the 'thingliness of the thing.' Heidegger describes these three modes as the conception of the thing 'as a bearer of traits, as the unity of a manifold of sensations, [and] as formed matter' (PLT: 30). Though this opening discussion informs his subsequent analysis of the artwork and its relation to earth-world, I leave it unexplored here in order to emphasize other aspects that more closely align with my own discussion. On the status of the thing, see: Magid: 2015; Morin: 2009.

something akin to its 'function' is the irreducibility of the artwork to the origins from which it stems. He writes in the essay that an artwork 'as work sets up a world. The work holds open the Open of the world.'[8] With this allusion to the opening of the world, Heidegger calls into consideration the ongoing tension through which the world is sustained as whole and, by virtue of this same tension or agonism, unable to ever *be* in a complete, secure and immobile sense. The world must endure as a space of action: the world which worlds (verb) as it brings the earth into its earthliness.

Heidegger clarifies the meaning of this antagonism between the setting up of worlds in artwork and the earth which withdraws from appearance inasmuch as it is disclosed in the artwork by turning to the specific materiality of the work. Here he writes that 'the sculptor uses stone just as the mason uses it, in his own way. But he does not use it up…To be sure, the painter also uses pigment, but in such a way that colour is not used up but rather only now comes to shine forth. To be sure, the poet also uses the word – not, however, like ordinary speakers and writers who have to use them up, but rather in such a way that the word only now becomes and remains truly a word.'[9] In each of these instances Heidegger highlights what attains to a fullness in being only insofar as something like the 'completeness' of that being is denied. The movement between the paint pigment which 'shines forth' and yet is not 'used up' points to the openness that exists between world and earth which come closer together as they move apart. The disclosure of the earth in the setting up of the world, here in the colour of the artwork, allows the fullness of that earth-world relation to come into being, while at the same time revealing the limit on that claim to pure earth-world knowledge. Acknowledging the tension of the relationship, one that is whole only insofar as it is fraught, he goes on to write 'only what is in motion can rest.'[10] This agitation allows the earth to maintain its claim to earthliness as a place irreducible to immanence and invokes something like the placedness that I introduced as central to the earth-world-history constellation; namely, the sustained act of being-in-place.

What appears in this moment of creating a work is the disclosure of something that simultaneously recalls the earth, *is* in the most literal sense of the earth and yet presents something

[8] PLT: 44.
[9] PLT: 46.
[10] PLT: 47.

new in itself. In this moment of creation, or what Heidegger calls the setting up of a world in which things and art are central, what is made apparent for the first time is the earth as earth. No longer a mere space in which humans appear but a site of meaning from which experience – as in the experience of artistic creation – can be gleaned, Heidegger describes the construction of human worlds as that which 'does not cause [earthly] material to disappear, but rather causes it to come forth for the very first time… *The work lets the earth be an earth.'*[11] More than anything, Heidegger is positing a claim regarding the disclosure of the earth via the construction of art in the world. Ineliminable then, is the status of the artist, who rather than existing merely as a conduit, brings earth and world into their disclosive co-being. This drawing of the earth out into the fullness of its being, reducible neither to mere materiality nor biological ground, shows Heidegger's writing as offering a new understanding of what it means to encounter the earth as human: namely, via an encounter that is premised upon discovery rather than utility, sensibility rather than immanence.

Kelly Oliver offers further clarity here, suggesting that 'in terms of the work of art, earth resists and refuses ever being used up in any one representation or interpretation.'[12] Invoking a methodology reminiscent of Benjamin's constellation, she continues by noting that 'Heidegger's introduction of the notion of earth performs or enacts that operation [of interpretation] as well as announcing it.'[13] Resisting any sense of a totalised universal or fixed truth, Oliver reveals the earth as the self-secluding ground which is unknowable except through acts of poetic interpretation in the world. Natalia Baeza reaffirms the aptness of calling an interpretation – artistic, poetic, or otherwise – a 'constellation' given its disclosure of 'a content that is more than the sum of its part, in which correspondences are arranged in ways that are reciprocally illuminating and affectively suggestive.'[14] Drawn out in acts of interpretative disclosure, the earth and world come into being as existential phenomena, i.e., the locales of experience, and conceptual frames in which experience then assumes meaning. What Oliver's project achieves in this quasi-Benjaminian reading of Heidegger's depiction of the earth is precisely such a privileging of the earth and world intersection, or their inherent 'co-

[11] PLT: 45.
[12] Oliver, 2015: 126.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Baeza, 2015: 40.

being' and hence the sustained becoming of earth and world, as the condition of earth and world ontologies in the first place.

Heidegger explains this tension between what is revealed in meaning and what resists revelation as the groundwork for appearance as such. What is thus understood as an encounter with the essence of a thing – whether that thing is positioned here as object, world, or earth – is made possible precisely because in the moment of opening into the Open, a withdrawal is made towards concealment. Mimicking the forceful co-being that holds together my own iteration of earth and world in the earth-world-history constellation, Heidegger clarifies the antagonism that binds earth and world together. Resisting simplification, he writes that 'the world is not simply the Open that corresponds to clearing, and the earth is not simply the Closed that corresponds to concealment. Rather, the world is the clearing of paths of the essential guiding directions with which all decision complies.'[15] Refusing the binary depiction of earth and world as closed and open, Heidegger develops an image of the agonistic co-being in which the withdrawal or concealment of the earth forms part of the Open.

Insofar as the earth sets up the coordinates for the material conditions that inform the matrix within which 'being' becomes an existential question, reducing it to physical form becomes impossible. Hence, in relation to the earlier agonism between the Open and Closed, Heidegger describes the way in which the earth 'rises up as self-closing' and in this moment reveals itself in the world as a locus of withdrawal.[16] Framing the earth as 'not only the "ground" in the literal sense of "soil" but also that which in every instance gives rise to what emerges,' totalising the earth would impose a threshold on the project of being itself.[17] It is here that Heidegger's language of concealment-unconcealment becomes meaningful. If the artist's work consists of the perpetual refraction of the irreducible origin 'art,' Heidegger maintains a similar refractive element in the earth that is drawn into the 'Open' of historical experience.[18] Beyond a mere space of understanding, the

[15] PLT: 53.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Foltz, 1995: 14.
[18] PLT: 44-45. For an overview of the way in which notions of the Open develop in Heidegger's writing, see Schatski, 1989.

Open signals an historical intrusion into the earth, in which the meaning of worlding is wrought from the concealing earth. Jeff Malpas extends this point, suggesting that the Open be seen as an event, such that 'to be is *to be in place,* and to be a phenomenon, in appearing, is similarly to be placed, or, as one might, to *take place.*'[19] To exist within the Open then is to act in such a way that responds to the concealing earth which draws away *and* to the world which demands perpetual renewal. It is thus a mistake to think that the withdrawal of the earth is the only source of antagonism in the production of works, for so too does the world demand renewal through the work that continually confronts the world and finds meaning within it.

To follow Malpas then, the 'event' of acting is met by an equal act of refusal to be drawn into the Open. Rather than assign the earth a form of agency, Heidegger's claim points to the irreducibility of the earth and the impossibility of 'completing' or totalising meaning in relation to the earth. More than simply a passive openness, existence in the Open is traversed by the agonism of earthly concealment and worldly disclosure. Oliver illuminates this once again, showing that 'world and earth do not exist apart from each other, but only in their conflict, the essential conflict between opening and closing, revealing and concealing, *Sagen* and *Versagen.*'[20] Existence within what Heidegger calls the *strife* of the earth-world opening resounds as a historical task. Or, the 'tension between the history of humans and their destiny through essential decisions is the strife between earth and world.'[21] In other words, to respond to the Open is to wrest new beginnings out of the agonal space of experience.

Returning to the force of artwork towards the essay's close Heidegger makes this point explicitly:

> When art happens – that is, whenever there is a beginning – a thrust enters history, history either begins or starts over again. History means here not a sequence in time of events of whatever sort, however important. History is the transporting of a people into its appointed task as entrance into that people's endowment.[22]

[19] Malpas, 2012: 46.
[20] Oliver, 2015: 123.
[21] Oliver, 2015: 125.
[22] PLT: 74.

Latent in Heidegger's claim regarding the realisation of history in art, the construction of which coincides with the disclosure of the earth and the construction of the world, is something like the triadic constellation of earth-world-history. Indeed, what becomes clear at this moment is the way in which Heidegger's own development of an earth-world relation depends on the potential for that ontological co-being to be read as a historical construct. I will return to this point in the final section of this chapter. Refusing an account of the earth that can be reduced to its immanent materiality, Heidegger argues for an account of being's placedness where the realisation of that place cannot be understood in exclusively material terms. The refusal to subsume the status of the earth to precisely such a consideration emerges with greater clarity in Heidegger's development of the 'fourfold,' a term that is central to his later writings.

1.2 From Fourfold to three

In the introduction to his book, *The Fourfold: Reading the Late Heidegger,* Andrew Mitchell asserts that 'the fourfold is nothing less than the inauguration of Heidegger's late thinking.'[23] The exact force of this point in relation to this project becomes clearer still with Stuart Elden's qualification of Heidegger's 'late thinking' as centred on 'issues of earth, nature, space and time.'[24] As Elden goes on to write, it was these determinants that formed the very substance of Heidegger's writing after the *Kehre,* that moment in Heidegger's writing that Elden classifies as 'immanently spatial.'[25] While I would want to add the further qualification here that Heidegger's later writing, particularly in the context of the fourfold, is marked by an immanent concern for the temporality of experience, the presentation of ideas within a spatial format is distinct to his late writing. Namely, what is central to Heidegger's discussion of the fourfold as an existential construct is the way in which its various elements are articulated within a spatial paradigm. A clear instance of this emphasis on the spatial dimension of experience is clear in Heidegger's discussion of human mortals in terms of their 'gathering together' rather than their orientation of their being towards death. Neglecting the very

[23] Mitchell, 2015: 3.
[24] Elden, 1999: 258 n 4.
[25] Ibid.

immediate temporality that is bound up with the classification of humans as mortals and highlighting instead their placed togetherness is just one instance of Heidegger's preoccupation with space that I will further unpack as I explore the meaning of the fourfold.

With the concept of the fourfold, Heidegger foregrounds the relational phenomenology of existence. In this sense he develops the original strife of the earth-world antagonism from the 'Artwork' essay, centred on the move between concealing and unconconcealing, disclosing and refusing, and begins to depict a notion of the earth-world as unfolding within a network of relations. The original manifestation of the earth-world in the earlier essay matures into the dialectical exchange of the fourfold, where earth and world are recast in terms of earth, sky, mortals and divinities. The earth as a manifest 'whole' is thus subsumed into its relational exchange of the four. By contrast, the world, is displaced from its earlier representation as the earth's opposing pole. In place, an account of the world as the space of relations produced in the co-being of the fourfold comes into view. To follow Oliver's reading, 'world is no longer one element amongst others in the fold of the four, but rather what results from their gathering.'[26] The world thus becomes a site of meaning generated through the relational act of 'dwelling in the fourfold.' Indeed, Heidegger writes in the 'Question Concerning Technology' that to dwell is to 'belong within the fourfold of sky and earth, mortals and divinities.'[27] Moving away from the specificity of the artwork and the boundedness of Heidegger's earlier interpretation of place to the appearance of the object, opens up his writing to a broader understanding of what it means to assume presence in place.

The force of the fourfold is made most apparent via an analysis of dwelling's intersection with being. And so, while Julian Young has described most readers of Heidegger as so 'baffled by the poetic brevity of the fourfold' that they are led 'to consign it to the silence of the too-hard basket,' given the centrality of the term to Heidegger's later and 'immanently spatial' writing, it is via an analysis of the fourfold that greater understanding of what it means to be-in-place becomes possible.[28] Not only does the fourfold bring us into closer proximity with Heidegger's later thinking, a move that

[26] Oliver, 2015: 140.
[27] QCT: 49.
[28] Young, 1993: 373.

shows his early work in a new light and establishes a more extensive genealogy of his writing generally, it shows the force of his writing in its application to current considerations on the placedness of being. The expansion of Heidegger's earlier scene of the earth-world antagonism into a fourfold encounter of relations disrupts the potential divide of actor and enacted that risked exposure in the relationship between worlding subject and earth-world, thereby foregrounding the inter-articulation of all facets of human experience – earth, sky, mortals and divinities – in the living out of dwelling.

Moving on from the specific activity of the artist and the rendering of the earth, or 'letting-be' of the earth in worldly artworks, Heidegger's discussion of the earth-world in the context of the fourfold is principally developed through the activity of dwelling. To dwell on the earth is to give meaning to the experience of being through a connection to place. A precondition to dwelling is thus a claim to space, hence Tim Ingold notes 'to build or to cultivate, [Heidegger] reasoned, one must already be, and to be one must stay or abide in a place.'[29] And yet, in much the same way that to sketch a line in the sand does not disclose a world and bring the earth out of concealment, to merely construct a building does not constitute dwelling. Dwelling attains through the disclosure of what it means to endure a human life, hence Heidegger notes that 'not every building is a dwelling.'[30] And while the earth informs the dwelling place of humans, 'dwelling is not to be understood as the possession of accommodation and housing. Whilst such things are indeed dwelling, they do not fulfil or ground its essence.'[31] Nor indeed, then, is dwelling synonymous with worlding. Recalling the language of the 'Artwork' essay, to dwell is to enact the constellation of the earth-world as co-being in history.

Part of Heidegger's ontology of dwelling is developed through an analysis of the etymology of *bauen,* the German word for dwell, into its modern formulation, *bin,* 'I am,' lending an intimacy to the two experiences – dwelling and being. 'The way in which you are and I am,' he writes, 'the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *bauen,* dwelling.'[32] David Krell writes in his preface

[29] Ingold, 2008: 1797.
[30] BW, 1993: 347.
[31] Elden,1999: 266.
[32] Krell, 1993, 349.

to Heidegger's 1954 essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking' that in dwelling 'man's Being rests in his capacity to cultivate and safeguard the earth, to protect it from thoughtless exploitation and to defend it against the calumnies of the metaphysical tradition.'[33] Carrying over the language of unconcealment, dwelling draws the earth out of concealment, creating a world in which the earth 'juts through.' Informed by their mutual antagonism and enacted via dwelling, earth and world carry one another beyond their current form. Resisting historical or ontological totalisation, the earth resists worldly disclosure, and, in turn, the world is renewed and sustained in acts of dwelling. In essence, then with every act of dwelling that draws the earth into unconcealment a move is made into concealment; a tension that simultaneously justifies and problematizes each act of worlding. In so doing, what is anticipated is future engagement with the earth as an origin which harbours greater potential meaning for the being of being human. Heidegger makes this point explicitly in *Being and Time*: 'Dasein can *be* authentically having-been only because it is futural. In a certain sense, having-been arises from the future.'[34] I return to this theme of the future becoming of Dasein in section 1.3 in the encounter I stage between Heidegger and James Baldwin.

Framed exclusively in terms of the agonism of dwelling, the fourfold risks appearing simply as a reiteration of the original ontology of earth-world dualism in Heideggger's earlier writing. Yet, central to the move from a twofold relation to a fourfold is an appeal to the unknown. To dwell is then to encounter the mystery of the yet to be disclosed nature of a relational phenomenon. It is perhaps for this reason that Heidegger adopts Hölderlin's position that 'poetically man dwells' on earth as an *ethos* for dwelling within the fourfold. For it is through poetic language, or, to follow Young, the 'poetic mediated experience' of dwelling that Dasein can be understood as perpetually encountering a plurality of mysterious or concealed existential horizons. Stuart Elden describes the irreducibility of Heidegger's account of dwelling as emerging out of his reading of Hölderlin's poetry. He contends that the two river hymns, 'The Rhine' and 'The Ister,' help Heidegger in his 'attempt to provide a non-metaphysical understanding of time-space.'[35] Without overcoming metaphysics, Heidegger sees

[33] Krell, 1993, 345.
[34] BT: 311.
[35] Elden, 1999: 268.

in poetry a mode of dwelling in which 'time is not understood in terms of calendrical dates, it is understood as the passage, as the journeying of becoming homely. Space is not understood in terms of Cartesian co-ordinates, extension or, indeed, space, but in terms of locale or place.'[36]

Poetry in this sense dissolves the certainty affixed to any one account of existential meaning. Which is not to say that poetic language, or poetic dwelling, *erodes* existential traditions, a destruction which effectively paralyses development, rather that poetry transfigures what it means to be in any one instance and sows the seeds for a reimagining of being. Heidegger writes in the second lecture of the series, 'What is Called Thinking?' that the poet's word attests to what is enigmatically beautiful, namely the potential concealed within that which is yet to be fully disclosed. 'The beautiful is not what pleases, but what falls within that fateful gift of truth which comes to be when that which is eternally non-apparent and therefore invisible attains its most radiantly apparent appearance.'[37] The affirmation of that which appears anticipates Arendt's claim that I will discuss in Chapter Two, that it is only in saying what is that reality becomes legible.[38] Echoing this sense of meaning's development in relation to speech, Lovitt describes in his introduction to *The Question Concerning Technology* the way in which Heidegger had a poet's ear for language and often wrote in a poetic way. He writes that 'for [Heidegger] the proper function of words is not to stand for, to signify. Rather, words point to something beyond themselves. They are translucent bearers of meaning. To name a thing is to summon it, to call it toward one. Heidegger's words are rich in connotation'.[39] The investment that both Heidegger and Arendt make in the notion that the truth of reality only comes into being once it becomes subject of poetry or debate is central to the hermeneutic qualities they attribute to spaces of experience. At the same time, this investment exposes the obligation Dasein and the political actor have towards the earth as a site of meaning and truth if they are to enact authentic being.

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[36] Ibid.
[37] WCT: 19.
[38] 'Each time we talk about things that can be experienced only in privacy or intimacy, we bring them out into a sphere where they will assume a kind of reality which, their intensity notwithstanding, they never could have had before. The presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves…' (HC: 50)
[39] QCT: xix.

Grounding the poetic once again within the constellation of the fourfold, 'dwelling' is thus envisaged not as the product of pure anthropocentric ideology, or total human sovereignty, but as that which corresponds to unfolding of earth, sky, mortals and divinities. Or, as Oliver writes, the fourfold marks the dispossession that is definitive of mortals.[40] In other words, that it is precisely *not* mortals who exclusively govern the conditions of being on and of the earth; it is rather the force of relations manifest in the fourfold that provides the hermeneutic groundwork for mortal being on earth. Foregrounding the relationality of human experience via the fourfold brings Heidegger closer to a form of ethics that then rejects the logic of sovereignty and recalls the impetus to think appearance in terms of reciprocity. The force of this will become clearer in Part II. Projecting this line of thought regarding the anti-sovereign act of dwelling-in-place onto the work of Arendt, provides a schematic that is reflected in her emphatic association between the moment of birth and the act of the miracle.[41]

Precisely because mortals cannot dictate the conditions of their own being, a fact that comes in advance of all instances of human experience, the moment of birth, the insertion of new life and thus fundamentally new forms of human potential appears as a miraculous moment. As an instance of pure affirmation of an undisclosed potential, birth corresponds with something like the essence of potential. Human birth thus acts as a reminder of the force of mortal potential within the manifold unity of the four. This is in particular contrast to the Heideggerian trope of being-toward-death, which though similarly motivated by the capacity for the mortal subject to enact originality, undergoes a radical reconstruction through Arendt's linguistic turn towards a language of birth.[42] Drawing closer again to the forceful relations of the fourfold, it is clear that within each term Heidegger instils a sense of movement. In so doing, what is made apparent is the incessant and enduring inter-articulation that pervades each force inherent to the fourfold, singularities that Heidegger presses to define as

[40] Oliver, 2015: 141.
[41] PP: 113-4.
[42] Even in death Heidegger denotes a quality particular to its human experience. For whilst death is marked as an experience fundamentally beyond the comprehension or control of human agents, it assumes a particular meaning by virtue of a humanly conceived hermeneutics of Being. 'To die,' Heidegger writes means 'to be capable of death *as* death' (1993, 352). Death becomes a central experience of dwelling, asserting the need to cherish the earth in its fourfold appearance such that its appearance endures. To this end, mortals dwell 'so that there may be a good death,' neither awaiting nor fearing death, but instilling meaning into the passage between birth and death.

belonging not unto themselves, but in their appearance within the 'simple oneness of the four.' Hence, he writes of the earth which spreads out and rises up, the sky which is 'the vaulting path of the sun… the wandering flitter of the stars,' the divinities which emerge as 'the beckoning messengers of the godhead' and the mortal who are called as such 'because they can die.'[43] And while Heidegger stops short of providing a clear definition of earth, sky, mortals and divinities, contra his typically obfuscating and etymologically esoteric use of language, each can in fact be largely understood in terms of their popular meanings.

Using the image of the bridge as an example for his reflections, Heidegger writes in 'Building Dwelling Thinking' of the earth as that which is *gathered* around the bridge as a landscape.[44] Hence, the bridge 'does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream.'[45] The bridge then discloses the relation of experience and place, it reveals the distance and proximity of place and how human experience can relate to that space as place. Hence, 'the bridge *gathers* the earth as landscape around the stream.'[46] The bridge divides and draws together, in essence, it discloses the relations of place.[47] As the bridge endures in space, it equally resists 'the sky's weather and its fickle nature.' More than simply providing a climactic or atmospheric definition of 'sky,' Heidegger invokes the temporality of seasons, the shifting of weather patterns and the harshness of the elements. In addition to a purely spatial landscape, he thus begins to introduce the temporal endurance of the bridge, which 'weathers the storm' of temporal exposure. This particular element of the fourfold comes to the fore with the introduction of mortals. Once again invoking a constancy of movement, Heidegger describes the bridge as it appears to mortals, writing:

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[43] BDT: 147-8.
[44] Heidegger's reflections on the rivers Ister and Rhine in Hölderlin's poems of the same names in his 1935 lecture course, 'An Introduction to Metaphysics' are similar in form to his 1936 reflections on the status of the bridge. He describes the river as that which 'does not merely grant the place *(Ort),* in the sense of the mere place *(blofien Platzes),* that is occupied by humans in their dwelling. The place is intrinsic to the river itself. The river itself dwells' (GA53, 41; HID 35); see also; Elden, 1999.
[45] BDT: 150.
[46] Ibid.
[47] A parallel can be discerned here with Arendt's discussion of the table as a metaphor for the gravitational pull that grounds community: 'To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time' (HC: 52).

'always and ever differently the bridge escorts the lingering and hastening ways of men to and fro, so that they may get to the other banks and in the end, as mortals, to the other side.'[48]

Persisting in time and space as a locus of meaning and meeting, the bridge gathers together and discloses a plurality. Static and seemingly devoid of internal evolution, the bridge evolves as a space with the passing of generations, disclosed anew in each encounter. If the three, earth, sky, and mortals already seem to have announced the triadic space of human experience, the earth-world-history constellation, the appearance of the divinities seems an unnecessary addition. Indeed, Julian Young notes that while the fourfold as a whole is marked by 'the almost total absence of any attempt by Heidegger scholars to explain what it is,' the appearance of the divinities is particularly striking in light of the apparent simplicity of their meaning.[49] That is to say, in 'Building Dwelling Thinking' Heidegger seems to locate the divinities in terms of a straightforward differentiation between theistic praise or atheism. In what follows I want to complicate this reading and introduce a new account of the divinities that recalls Heidegger's concern with the historicity of experience.

As noted, in the story of the bridge, Heidegger can be read as reducing the divinities to their physical representation:

> The bridge *gathers,* as a passage that crosses, before the divinities – whether we explicitly think of, and visibly *give thanks for,* their presence, as in the figure of the saint of the bridge, or whether that divine presence is obstructed or even pushed wholly aside.[50]

Though the passage invokes a simple duality between theism and atheism, to locate divinities in such isolated terms is to forgo what struck Heidegger as intrinsic to their being. Namely, their comprehensibility as discernible only within the manifold unity of the fourfold. If we recall the gathering together of the bridge in connection to earth, sky, and mortals, each assumed meaning as an ontology intercut with the plurality of the four. Hence, the bridge as gathering together a landscape for

[48] BDT: 150.
[49] Young, 1993: 373.
[50] BDT: 151.

a plurality whose appearance renews as with the passing of seasons. To sever the divinities from this constellation is thus to fracture not only the ontological depth of the divinities but the broader constellation of the fourfold as a whole. Young offers one of the few solutions to the appearance of the divinities, one that informs my own dual reading of the divinities. And yet, his clarification, while insightful, I ultimately only agree with the initial contours of his position, the latter I view as complicit in the ontological severance of the fourfold. Moreover, that the fourfold is read as definitive of Heidegger's later thinking, the danger of interpreting it in the way Young does has broader implications for his later work as a whole. Before I turn to Young's reading, I want to reiterate a point that Heidegger's makes in his essay: 'But "on the earth" already means "under the sky." Both of these *also* mean remaining before the divinities" and include a "belong to men's being with one another." By a *primal* oneness of the four – earth and sky, divinities and mortal – belong together in one.'[51] And so, while I will show that I agree with the nature of Young's reading, it is the polarized context into which he places it that I resist.

Young's reading hinges on the coupling of the fourfold into 'earth and sky' and 'divinities and mortal,' at the expense of Heidegger's reiteration throughout the essay that they 'belong together in one.' Markus Wielder describes the 'ingenuity' of Young's approach as one of the most 'thorough and perspicacious' accounts of the fourfold. 'For one thing, he couches the fourfold in a twofold. That is to say, for Young, the four dimensions on Heidegger's list are grounded in a more basic duality, namely, the dynamic interplay between *nature* and *culture.*'[52] However, Young's couching of the fourfold into two polarised, albeit intersecting, axes undermines Heidegger's emphasis on a manifold unity. It assumes that the ontology of the four is in fact the additive, rather than relational, result of two couplets. And yet, if the supposed clarity afforded by breaking the fourfold is not a solution to its role in Heidegger's later work, what reading does offer an illumination? I suggest that there are two possible readings of the divinities as part of the broader fourfold constellation that recall Heidegger's concern with Dasein's determinant of historicity, while at the same time speaking to his later concerns

[51] BDT: 147.
[52] Young, 2012: 489.

with the project of dwelling. While I present twin readings of the divinities, it is the latter account that I think holds greater merit as part of Heidegger's broader existential project.

The first reading I suggest shares common ground with Young's account of the divinities, however only insofar as it denotes within them an axiology of moral worth. In opposition to Young who goes on to locate this *ethos* within a nature-world divide, I persist in thinking the ethical force of the divinities within the fourfold. In as much as this interpretation of the divinities centres on the question of ethics, it recalls Heidegger's project of an original ethics, which becomes 'godly' as it transcends the appearance of singular generations to Dasein in a plural temporality.[53] Young evokes this question of transcendent historical meaning by transforming 'divinities' into 'divine destinings:'

> The element of the fourfold that is most difficult to understand is "the gods," die Gottlichen, literally "the godly ones." Heidegger says of Greek tragedy that it "brought the presence of the gods, [i.e.,] brought the dialogue of divine and human destinings to radiance" (QCT 34). In some sense, therefore, the gods are the "divine destinings." What are these? The divine destinings, "laws" (HE 312) or "edicts" (I 116), are the fundamental ethos of a community.'[54]

For Young, divine destinings figure as the intangible *ethos* of a community, the grounds of appeal for moral claims and hence a form of tradition that acts as the basis for moral integrity within a community. Why he then separates this from the broader context of the fourfold is unclear. And so, rather than dismiss his contribution outright, I suggest thinking it together with the 'oneness' of the four. Indeed, in so doing, the environmental aspects of Heidegger's project become apparent; namely, the *ethos* of divine destinings as located in the context of earthly dwelling. An ethics of the fourfold assumes form in the relational ground of experience in which place itself becomes a source of ethical meaning. That this place appears within the context of a plurality who continually appear in time and locate themselves meaningfully in relation to future and past times, an ethics of the fourfold cannot be

[53] Heidegger, 1976.
[54] Young, 1993: 374.

contained to one instance or one moment but must continually be rethought in relation to that historical plurality who find themselves within it.

If reading the divinities in terms of an *ethos* of dwelling is the first reading I offer, the second extends this realm into the context of the triadic constellation earth-world-history that I have been developing throughout this Chapter. Here again I rely in part of Young's account. Going beyond the notion of a transcendent *ethos,* Young invokes the Heideggerian image of the hero as a historical figure in which to embody the ethical force of the divinities. Divinities thus invoke the 'more or less mythologized figures preserved in the collective memory of a culture, who embody, collectively, what it is to live properly as an Athenian, a German, a New Zealander, or whatever.'[55] Framed as the preservers of cultural meaning, the divinities affirm a form of historical transcendence. Developing this reading fully hinges on Heidegger's reiteration in 'Building Dwelling Thinking' on the mortality of man. Hence, 'to die means to be capable of death *as* death. Only man dies, and indeed continually, as long as he remains on earth, under the sky, before the divinities.'[56] Recalled in this context, the divinities point towards that which makes the mortality of humans meaningful. I suggest that the missing variable here is the coming of future generations on earth, whose not-yet-present presence gives meaning to the present. Arendt adopts some of Heidegger's language of the gathering of things into the world to make a similar point, and it is her idea of a potential earthly immortality that I suggest is, in essence, Heidegger's divinities. I will quote her at length from *The Human Condition* to make this point, anticipating the common ontology that connects Arendt's public space with Heidegger's account of dwelling:

> Only the existence of a public realm and the *world's subsequent transformation into a community of things which gathers men together and relates them to each other* depends entirely on permanence. If the world is to contain a public space, it cannot be erected for one generation and planned for the living only; it must transcend the life-span of mortal men. Without this transcendence into a potential earthly immortality, no politics, strictly speaking,

[55] Ibid.
[56] BDT: 148.

> no common world and no public realm, is possible. For unlike the common good as Christianity understood it—the salvation of one's soul as a concern common to all—the common world is what we enter when we are born and what we leave behind when we die. It transcends our lifespan into past and future alike; it was there before we came and will outlast our brief sojourn in it. It is what we have in common not only with those who live with us, but also with those who were here before and with those who will come after us.[57]

Read back into the context of the fourfold, a shared affinity can be gleaned between Arendt's transcendence into earthly immortality and Heidegger's divinities: each determines the present in terms of its historical potential, realised and preserved by virtue of an enduring *ethos* or orientation towards the not-yet-present presence of future generations. The dynamism between the divinities and the 'wholeness of the fourfold' is thus embedded within the historical development of the world as a space of mortal dwelling that always already exists for the sake of posterity.

Yet, divinities are not simply present as a pre-constituted conditioning force; they, as with earth, sky and mortals, constitute a force that continues to evolve in acts of worldly dwelling. Within the fourfold there is thus a sense of reciprocal responsivity attached to each relational bind that is made manifest in the experience of dwelling and building up of worlds of meaning. In this way the fourfold reveals itself as a site of forceful activity, defying entrapment within a singular historical narrative. Hence, my appeal to think the space of human experience throughout Heidegger's writing as an evolving constellation of earth-world-history. Indeed, taking up R. Raj Singh's reading of the fourfold's introduction in Heidegger's thought it becomes clear how the fourfold in fact advances Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology towards something like earth-world-history. By blurring, as it were, the edges of earth and world and displacing any notion of primacy onto the relational phenomenon of the fourfold, Singh describes Heidegger's chief aim as the destruction of 'the very way anything is "defined" and its "essence" articulated in metaphysical thinking.' As Singh maintains, 'Heidegger wants to grasp the "essencing" not merely the "essence," "worlding" not

[57] HC: 55 (emphasis added).

merely the "world."'[58] Not only does the fourfold enjoin a reading of earth and world that defies extant categorization, it recalls that language introduced in the introduction so central to the notion of a constellation, of earth 'earthing' as the world 'worlds.' With this in mind, it is perhaps little wonder that it is in Hölderlin that Heidegger finds an image of the irreducibility of relational being.

Heidegger sees in Hölderlin's poetry not only freedom from the humanist metaphysics entrapping other poets (here Heidegger identifies Schiller, Goethe, and Winckelmann) but a poetry that 'problematizes its own essential being (*Wesen*)…Hölderlin is privileged because his poetry, as Heidegger understands it, questions its own destinal and onto-historical mandate.'[59] Assessing the disclosedness of the fourfold within the onto-historical mandate of Holderlin's poetry invites a conception of the fourfold that remains wedded to an irreducible ontological horizon. The persistence of the fourfold as a site of forceful relationality exposes the contingency of all acts of dwelling to receive each of the four; to world in a way that allows the unfolding of earth, sky, mortals, and divinities to assume presence. In light of this Mitch Rose proposes considering all acts of dwelling as the asserting of 'claims.' In this reading, against the unfolding of the fourfold, which is perpetually caught between concealment and unconcealment, the act of dwelling remains a mere claim to permanence. The endurance that is attached to each act of dwelling then simultaneously sows the seeds of its own potential destruction. For as Rose notes insofar as 'the fourfold is the totality of changing shifting relations that variously allow the world to unfold as a world, that is, as a specific site marked out in and through material things,' any attempt to alter the status of the fourfold through dwelling risks encountering its own redundancy or destruction.[60]

To say that acts of dwelling can be subsumed under the language of assertion and claiming does not undermine the integrity of mortal force within the fourfold. Indeed, to undermine the force of any one of the four would by necessity undermine the simple oneness of the four. Fracturing the capacity for mortal force within the fourfold equally fractures the relational appearance of earth, sky, and divinities. Without Heidegger's example of the mortal force constructing the bridge, the fourfold

[58] Singh, 1990: 219.
[59] Fóti, 1993: 393
[60] Rose, 2012: 768.

cannot be gathered together; the two sides of a river remain alien to one another. Yet equally, without the river, the bridge cannot be built. Negotiating the development of the earth from its earlier presentation alongside the world in the 'Artwork' essay to its iteration within the fourfold, one need think only of Heidegger's desire to emphasise the interconnectedness of different locales for thinking the hermeneutics of experience. The fourfold builds upon the tension of the earth-world to show that implicit in the disclosure of the earth are acts of truthful unconcealment which aspire towards the transcendent historical meaning. The fourfold thus figures as Heidegger's way of attaching an immediately historical dimension to the earth-world. Attempts to separate the fourfold into axes that resemble the earlier earth-world framing such as those by Young, who distils the fourfold into nature and culture, or Graham Harman who attempts to view it along concealing/unconcealing poles, fall short of understanding what Heidegger is attempting to expose through the introduction of the fourfold.[61] Instead it is through the fourfold that Heidegger shows the porous quality of the constellation in which worlds (noun) world (verb). When Young then attempts to advance his bifurcation of the fourfold into a nature/culture divide, by arguing that present within each world is an iteration of the fourfold unto itself he further obscures what Heidegger is seeking to show. The fourfold provides a common constellation for thinking human experience that is differently drawn out through acts of human worlding.

When Young writes, 'the primary object of my guardianship is not the universe or the planet, but rather the particular fourfold to which I belong,' he encapsulates a mode of human experience that is in fact at odds with the manifold unity of the fourfold.[62] To follow Heidegger in engaging the constellation of the fourfold is to think the singularity of its manifestation, even where the singularity defies totalization – here again elements of Benjamin's dialectical analytic of the constellation are palpable. What Young then takes forward from his reading of the fourfold is precisely what Heidegger sought to avoid in his movement from the earth-world to the fourfold. If an attempt to bifurcate the fourfold is to be undertaken, more is to be gained by distilling modalities of approaching it than from severing it internally. Which is to say that to read the holism of the fourfold as an

[61] See Harman, 2009.
[62] Young, 1993: 380.

encounter of space and time, rather than bring about a chiastic understanding of the fourfold itself, as undertaken by Young and Harman, gives rise to an understanding of dwelling within the fourfold that is suspended between the movement of history and the cultivation of place.[63]

This mode of encounter allows for an authentic unfolding of experience without attempting to impede the internal constellation of the fourfold. Continually recalling that the fourfold 'belongs together in one,' the broader ecology of human experience comes into view, irreducible to the 'earth' as a seemingly exclusive space of primordial nature. It was precisely this sort of reductive reading that Heidegger espoused in his account of the technological encounter of the earth, in which the forces of the fourfold are reduced to a state of inanimate 'standing-in-reserve.'[64] Calculated within a paradigm of extraction, the earth in the technological worldview is denied its ontological import in constellations like the fourfold and earth-world-history. While the technological worldview in the terms that Heidegger first described it are explicit in current evaluations of natural resources, it also permeates the discourse of technological 'green' fixes that are presented in the guise of panacea-like resolutions to the violence of the climate crisis. Where resistance often appear in the attempt to emphasise debate around accountability for the climate crisis and the demand to respect indigenous alternatives to green technology, this resistance can be framed within Heideggerian terms. In other words, what can be shown to exist within the claims, for instance of indigenous activists challenging the oil pipeline in Dakota, who maintain that stopping the pipe is about 'more than stopping a pipeline,' is something akin to a Heideggerian realisation of dwelling.[65] I will return to this point in Chapter Five.

[63] Oliver's words reinforce this point: 'Earth is associated with the past as given, our *native ground* and rootedness in history; but the past and history given as open to interpretation and reinterpretation such that they are never fixed or static but always dynamic and relational.' (Oliver, 2015: 113)
[64] Heidegger discussed this concern of the 'standing reserve' in his essay 'The Question Concerning Technology' (QCT: 3-35). The essay was a revised version of part II of his four part essay delivered in Bremen in 1949, see Heidegger, 2012.
[65] Estes, 2019: 2. See also: Estes, 2019; Gilio-Whitaker, 2019, Hoover, 2017; Pulido and De Lara, 2018; Voyles, 2015. A similar attempt to enframe the world is evident in the expansion of resource extractive processes such as coal and gas mines which rely on the deregistration of sacred indigenous sites, see for example: Birch, 2016; Gartry, 2015; Jones, 2015.

Turning to the writing of Toula Nicolapoulos and George Vassilacopoulos, a realisation of Heidegger's project of dwelling in the fourfold can be detected in the politics of decolonisation.[66] Nicolapoulos and Vassilacopoulos describe the way in which the inability to respond to the history of settler-colonialism and the unceded sovereignty of the Indigenous people in Australia has created a situation in which 'white Australians are yet to dwell in this land philosophically.'[67] In dialogue with arguments like those of Aileen Moreton-Robinson, that Indigenous ontological relations to land 'continue to unsettle white Australia's sense of belonging,' Nicolapoulos and Vassilacopoulos progress a critique of Australian settler-colonialism that puts into relief the fractured integrity of this dwelling.[68] Invoking an Arendtian sense of reality or history, which assumes meaning through the impartiality ascribed by the plurality who attest to it, Nicolapoulos and Vassilacopoulos' use of 'dwelling' exposes the way in which oppressive histories fracture not only the lived experience of the oppressed but undermine the claims to existential fulfilment of the oppressors. In essence, their critique of Australia effectively realises James Baldwin's argument that 'no community can be established on so genocidal a lie' as that of colonial subjugation.[69] Located within the Australian context then, they see the uncompromising presence of Indigenous sovereignty as the resounding condition giving conceptual shape to the fourfold that unreflective projects of settler-colonialism refuse to acknowledge. And so, even while located in the immediate context of the lived Australian experience, their reading lends itself to a broader project of critical historiography, not as the basis of a false universalism, but as the recognition, following Rose, that every claim to dwelling is marked by a relationality of exposure.

The demand to respond to the history of oppression, a demand that Nicolapoulos and Vassilacopoulos locate in the question posed to white Australia 'where do you come from?' thus exposes the dependence of a claim to dwelling that is in fact a settlement based on dispossession. Challenging what was then never in fact a claim to dwelling, but merely a claim to presence, one

[66] On the co-implication of dwelling and settler-colonialism see for example Clarke and Yusoff, 2017; Darke, 1996; Donaldson, 1996; McKittrick, 2006; Pulido, 2002.
[67] Nicolapoulos and Vassilacopoulos, 2014: 15.
[68] Moreton-Robinson, 2015: xix.
[69] Baldwin, 1978: 90.

which depended on the absence of the other, their history, and the entanglement of earth-world-history linking them, coincides with the disclosure of the fourfold.[70] Left intact, without the fissures imposed by the dualism of culture-nature, earth-world that dissemble and disfigure the unity of conditions out of which the experience of being arise, the lives of oppressors and oppressed are continually recalled in their need to respond to one another. The further description of this command as '*the meeting place* of two worlds and their corresponding accounts of their origins,' is not then the collision of two or more 'fourfolds,' but the trace of the antagonism intrinsic to its manifold unity, one that recalls the original strife of the earth-world in the 'Artwork' essay.[71]

Recognising the ontology of the fourfold as occurring within the unity of its manifold forces is fundamental to the development of an ethics of earthly life, especially one that assumes a central function in the organisation of claims to environmental justice. Or, perhaps moreover, the recognition of the ontological boundedness of worldly dwellings to the forces of earth, sky, mortals and divinities is fundamental in developing an ethics central to which is the privation of a wholly anthropocentric concern. What the fourfold reveals is the quintessential interconnectedness of each facet of experience, and hence, the inability to reprise oneself from the others without simultaneously fracturing one's own authenticity. What transpires in the attempt to multiply the fourfold and claim the presence of multiple fourfolds which each exist within their own specific ontology and as providing their own set of conditions for appearance is thus a form of alienation. The failure to understand the fourfold as itself a space of plurality which endures in the act of dwelling undermines what it means to interpret dwelling as a form of existential action. In other words, the negation of the fourfold, whether that occurs in the attempt to sever its internal relationality or in claiming that there is no common fourfold but merely distinct and atomized fourfolds, ultimately undermines the force of dwelling as a worldly practice that renews the oneness of the four. While the technological worldview undermined the resonance of the earthly world, the failure to apprehend the relational ontology of the fourfold undoes the capacity to think the rootedness of human experience in something that both

[70] The words of Mahmoud Darwish reflecting on the status of Palestine resonate here, namely as 'the presence of absence' (2011).
[71] Nicolapoulos and Vassilacopoulos, 2014: 12.

precedes and endures beyond the temporal immediacy of experience. What I have sought to show here is that the fourfold is not only framed in temporal terms and the mortality of the mortal, but, recalling the image of a chiastic encounter is always already positioned within an expanse of space. Abstracting the fourfold through linguistic enframings such as *'a* fourfold' or *'this* fourfold' undermines the enduring commonality within all iterations of dwelling and all conceptions of worldly communities.

1.3 Encountering History with Baldwin

Implicit to the abstraction of the fourfold is the refusal to allow unconcealment to occur as a historical happening. From Heidegger's earlier 'Artwork' essay what this limits is the agonism of that Opening in which the world worlds as the earth earths. Losing hold of this space of appearance in which the various spaces that coordinate place are refracted through one another ultimately signals a loss in the historicity of being. That experience is always already inflected through a historical lens is a point that Heidegger made explicit in his discussion of Dasein in *Being and Time.* While the 'thereness' of Dasein assumes greater clarity through the ontology of place that is developed firstly in terms of the origin of earth and world and later in the oneness of the fourfold, the temporality of this 'there' can be determined by returning to Heidegger's discussion of historicity in *Being and Time.* Before I move to discuss the placedness of Arendt's appeal to action in the intrinsically historical event of natality in Part II, the political condition that Arendt in fact describes as the original condition for history, I want to highlight the ways in which Heidegger's ontology of place anticipates Arendt's account of natality's placedness.[72] Moving forward with an account of earth and world developed in Heidegger's two essays just discussed, I want to situate them in relation to his appeal to Dasein's historicity and in so doing bring the coherency of the earth-world-history into view.

The status of 'history' as it appears in Heidegger's writing resists division into the distinct spaces of past, present, and future. Much like Heidegger's refusal to separate the oneness of the fourfold, the question of history is treated with a similar openness. Indeed, Heidegger positioned the

[72] HC: 9.

collapse of time into the categorical divisions past, present, and future, as indicative of a fundamentally 'inauthentic understanding of time.'[73] In contrast to the authenticity of historical experience, in which past and future assume ontological meaning in the present as the ground of historiographical understanding that harbours the potential for original action, inauthentic time produces an alienated experience. Joan Stambaugh likens the task of confronting the historical inauthenticity discussed in *Being and Time* to a Kierkegaardian leap, namely as demanding a plunge 'straight into the ontological abyss' that is the text. Bearing this caution in mind my remarks here are intentionally direct and transparent.[74] In essence, then, the inauthenticity of history that Heidegger locates in the division of time, disguises the embeddedness of human experience in the constellating forces of time which disrupt the present in their anachronist and asynchronous appearances. [75] To experience life inauthentically then coincides with no longer 'living a moment that is grounded in previous moments and that in turn grounds moments to come.' In this inauthentic encounter with history what is lost is an 'openness to time.'[76]

More can be said on this point if we recall the opposition of earth-world-history to a fixed totality. Or insofar as the place of experience *is* what it is so long as it remains in contestation with the response of Dasein to the question of Being – something that Stambaugh describes as Dasein's status as intrinsically relational – temporal, physical, let alone ontological fixity cannot be ascribed to either earth and world as distinct entities nor to past, present, and future.[77] Forgoing the totalisation of earth, world, and history echoes the position recounted in the introduction in terms of Benjamin's challenge to the subsumption of phenomena via an epistemology discerned exclusively through Kantian cognition – hence, the force of the earth-world-history *constellation*. The task of each inhabitant, or Dasein, thus being the active endeavour to discern (and re-discern and re-discern) meaning in spite of

[73] BT: 312.
[74] 1977: 153.
[75] The activity that Heidegger ascribes to authentic temporal experience is that of care. It is through acts of care that Dasein is able to take up a position that is rooted in the present. In *Being and Time,* Heidegger writes, 'Only in terms of the rootedness of Dasein in temporality, do we gain insight into the existential *possibility* of the phenomenon that we characterized at the beginning of our analytic of Dasein as its fundamental constitution; namely, *being-in-the-world.*' 334-5. See also, Blattner, 1999: 98-121; Crowell, 2015.
[76] Mulhall, 2013: 160.
[77] Stambaugh, 1969: 31

the impossibility of establishing a totalising a set of constellating relations. To be in place in earth-world-history is then to be engaged in a perpetual act of 'placing.' An analogy might be felt here to Rose's position regarding the 'claims' to appearance that are made within the fourfold. Or indeed, to Arendt's account of thinking in *The Life of the Mind* in terms the image of Penelope's web, which 'undoes itself every morning what it has finished the night before. *For the need to think can never be stilled.'*[78] Turning back to the experience of being, itself an 'unstillable' act, redrawn with each renewed encounter with earth-world-history, I want to situate Dasein's relation to the unfolding of time in the context of James Baldwin's appeal to 'history making.' Bringing Heidegger and Baldwin into dialogue on the project of history foreshadows the direction in which I move throughout this thesis; namely, of thinking within a plurality. Indeed, it is my contention that Heidegger and Baldwin share a common concern for the normative force of tradition to override the present. And so, while I recognise the jarring nature of bringing Heidegger and Baldwin together, one that is reinforced by the distinctness of their immediate political and philosophical domains, the dialogue I create between them is intended to expose their overlapping reflections on the construction of history.

While Heidegger frames his concern for Dasein's inability to encounter history authentically as the loss of their openness to time, for Baldwin the erosion of history assumes the more immediate active status as the denial of the present as a space of original potential. That being said, what underpins both of their claims is the shared conviction that what being in the present entails is a recognition of the enduring force of the past *and* the capacity to critically engage the presence of that past for the sake of the future.

> Heidegger:
>
> In its factical being Dasein always is how and "what" it already was. Whether explicitly or not, it *is* its past. It is its own past not only in such a way that its past, as it were, pushes itself along "behind" it, and that it possesses what is past as a property that is still objectively

[78] LMT: 88 (emphasis added).

present and at times has an effect on it. Dasein "is" its past in the manner of *its* being which, roughly expressed, on each occasion "occurs" out of its future.[79]

Baldwin:

From my point of view, we have to take the past and find out to what extent the things one carries in one's self – the burdens we carry out of the past – cause you to do what we call the past. That burden we all carry in the present; one has to discover to what extent your apprehension of the past dictates the shape of the future.[80]

Without collapsing the chasm dividing the projects of Heidegger and Baldwin, which is clear in terms of the immediate concerns that prompt their engagement with the status of history, what comes out in these reflections is a shared concern with the ontological endurance of what is conceived as 'past.' And yet, what is also clear is the investment of meaning in the past *insofar* as it is engaged not merely as adjacent to the future but implicated within the future. Hence, Heidegger goes onto write in *Being and Time* that 'Dasein is authentically *having-been*…Dasein can *be* authentically having-been only because it is futural. In a certain sense, having-been arises from the future.'[81] Both Heidegger and Baldwin stress the indivisibility of history through an appeal to the immediacy with which past, present, and future, assume form. The implication this then has for thinking the place of human activity or experience is one that extends beyond the merely immanent to reveal the intersecting temporalities that appear as 'history' or the 'historicity' of being. This becomes clearer still in the context of earth-world-history where the idea of 'history' coincides with the continual withdrawal, unconcealment, and reappearance of that place in which appearance occurs.

This intersection of past and future in the present is not then reducible to a temporal position outside the present. Rather, to cite Baldwin once again, 'History is the present…If history were the past, history wouldn't matter. History is the *present,* the *present.* You and I are history. We carry our

[79] BT: 19.
[80] Mead and Baldwin, 1971: 203-4.
[81] BT: 311.

history.'[82] The indivisibility of temporality is paralleled in Heidegger's account of the renewal of the earth and world, which were shown in sections 1.1 and 1.2 as spaces in which rest is figured as motion and hence as always already caught in the tension of expiring and renewing. Part of Baldwin's recognition that apprehension of the past dictates the shape of the future, is his injunction to reclaim the present as a space emancipated from the shackles of the past. To this extent he writes that 'we can't change the past, but we have to change the present. Or, we can only redeem the past by what we do in the present.'[83] Anticipating Benjamin's theological language of redemption, that will appear in the messianic reading of natality in Chapter Four, Baldwin implicates action in the present as a way of mediating actions in the past.[84] Without then reducing this to eschatological ends, Baldwin builds an image of the present as an anti-instrumental convergence of temporalities. Maintaining a space of historical creation, without falling victim to an exhaustive account of the present geared exclusively towards an emancipation of past and present 'for the sake of' the future brings to the fore the need for an anti-instrumental account of action (Chapter Six).

When Frantz Fanon writes in the introduction to *Black Skin, White Masks* that 'every human problem must be considered from the standpoint of time,' he evinces a position of worldly being as embedded in history.[85] And yet, when he then continues that 'the future should be an edifice supported by living men [which] is connected to the present to the extent that I consider the present in terms of something to be exceeded [*depasser*],' he implicates the present in the future whilst still holding onto the present as a space of experience and not as an ends-oriented juncture in time.[86] In other words, Fanon resists viewing the present as redemptive of the past and present exclusively for the sake of the future. Heidegger's refusal to think the unfolding of experience in time as sequestered into the inauthentic categories of past, present, and future, functions as his own critical praxis of

[82] Mead and Baldwin, 1971: 188.
[83] Mead and Baldwin, 1971: 193.
[84] Mbembe shares this concern for redemption, although here his thinking is explicitly informed by Christianity, see ANL: 2.
[85] Fanon, 1986: 6. The complex of temporality and phenomenology in Fanon's writing is central to his account of the structural dimensions of racialised experience which discloses itself in the very formation of identity. The task that he locates in psychoanalysis then is to make explicit the racialized structures that have rendered society phenomenologically blind to the conditions that produce identity. He makes this point throughout *Black Skin, White Masks,* ultimately calling for a social revolution in the final chapter.
[86] Ibid.

understanding the temporality of experience. Hence, when Nigel Gibson describes Fanon's project as 'not simply historical, or solely contextual, but one of praxis,' he similarly locates praxis in the present as emancipated from the prescribed ends of future redemption.[87] What Fanon and Heidegger then share in their reading of the subjectivity of experience as occurring under the weight imposed by the present as a space of open creation, is the intrinsic anti-teleological dimension of this experience.

Indeed, it is in coming to address the status of temporality in *Being and Time* that I make the links between Heidegger's work and the currently unfolding climate crisis apparent. Or rather, it is at this point that I set up the links between Heidegger's account of temporality and the indivisibility of temporal progression that will underpin redemption of the exilic condition in the climate crisis in Part III. What is implicit here is the openness to time intrinsic to an authentic experience of temporality. Indeed, in a description of Heideggerian temporal experience that might be read as speaking back to Baldwin as well, Lawrence Vogel writes that 'history is not something over against a subject but is the lived context from out of which one's possibilities emerge.'[88] Echoed here is Baldwin's central premise that 'all of us are products of our shared history.'[89]And yet, precisely because the subject – Heideggerian and Baldwinian – remains free to respond to historical world-occurrences, a freedom granted by the existential determinant of historicity – the same historicity that also makes world-occurrences possible as historical events – temporality becomes a 'space' of experience. David Wood makes this distinction between historicity and history, and while Wood's point is made in relation to Heidegger, I want to argue that this argument applies equally to Baldwin:

> It will be Heidegger's claim…that the very possibility of history as a discipline rests invisibly on our existential historicity. He distinguishes between historicity and historicality/historiography. The latter concerns the course of events, and our study of them. While historicity has to do with how Dasein, our manner of being in the world, is historically

[87] Gibson, 2003: 12.
[88] Vogel, 1994, 50.
[89] Lapenson, 2013: 203.

> engaged (or not), how it enacts or performs itself in and as history, which is itself a dimension of our fundamentally temporal existence.[90]

Further clarifying the way in which historicity is constitutive of history, both Baldwin and Heidegger challenge the non-engagement with the existential of historicity to expose the way in which a failure to think historicity imperils the present. What is lost in this moment of forsaking the historical potential of present-being is the capacity to reject history's claim to normativity and with it the normalisation of violence as such

In *Notes of a Native Son,* Baldwin describes the weight of the world which pushes injustice into the realm of the commonplace as something that can never be accepted.[91] In so doing, he confronts the insistence of the past in the present and the images of expectation or preconceptions that persist in the dissemblance of history as beyond the reach of original disclosure. What Heidegger's project then offers Baldwin's is a reanimation of the original impetus to challenge the role of history or history formation in the present. A further example of this is apparent in Fanon's description of the colonial city as divided into two separate halves, bridged only by a communicative language of violence and counterviolence.[92] What is made apparent in Fanon's example is Heidegger's notion of an 'inauthentic' relation to historicity or temporality, where tradition assumes a status exclusive of the emancipatory potential of original historicity (Chapter Five).[93] Yet moreover, I would argue that it is here in Fanon's divided city that the severed form of fourfold is discernible. Insisting upon the false claim to a plurality of fourfolds which exist in different registers, the colonial city refuses to recognise the wholeness (or perhaps oneness) of its history and its placedness. The confrontation with this alienation detected by Nicolapoulos and Vassilacopoulos in the question 'where do you come from?' speaks to the alienating and inauthentic ontology of Fanon's divided city. Again, the exact force of this question will be explored in Chapter Five.

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[90] Wood, 2018: 6.
[91] Baldwin, 2012: 113-4.
[92] Fanon, 1986: 46.
[93] See, BT: 20-21. Heidegger refers here to the 'dominance' of tradition which deprives Dasein of its own 'leadership in questioning and choosing.'

Present across both of Heidegger's essays discussed in this chapter is a language of concealment and the historically situated practice of disclosure or unconcealment. What appeared in the setting forth of the Open in the 'Artwork' essay and the dwelling within the fourfold of 'Building Dwelling Thinking' was precisely the placedness of experience *in* time. That this intersection of place and history assumes an ontological status in the meaning of experience and those actions that give texture to experience is made apparent in the constellation earth-world-history. Rather than simply capture the varying forces that coordinate the appearance of action and thus might be made reducible to the mere locus of action, what earth-world-history emphasises is the way in which the placedness of being informs the very nature of action in the first place, hence my appeal to Baldwin and the politics of making history. The force of this argument becomes clearer still as I turn in Chapter Two to the placedness of Arendt's account of political action. Mirroring the structure of this opening chapter of Part I, in my discussion of Arendt's account of human placedness I move exegetically through her writing before turning to the historical condition of human natality to clarify the way in which this placedness assumes meaning in the context of action.

Chapter Two: Coming back to Earth with Arendt

> *What we call real is already a web which is woven of earthly, organic, and human realities, but which has come into existence through the addition of infinite improbabilities.*
>
> Hannah Arendt, 'Introduction *into* Politics'

Hannah Arendt begins her 1958 monograph *The Human Condition* with the image of a satellite set against the gravitational pull of the earth. 'To be sure,' Arendt writes, 'the man-made satellite was no moon or star, no heavenly body which could follow its circling path for a time span that to us mortals bound by earthly time, lasts from eternity to eternity.'[1] The seemingly divine depiction of the satellite is abruptly cut off by Arendt, who turns back to earth rather than pursue its course out into space. With this shift she challenges the implicit view of the satellite, namely, that space is the new frontier and the earth a mere launchpad in the move towards extra-terrestrial dwelling.[2] In place, Arendt's return to earth coincides with a renewed investigation into the meaning of human earthliness or, more acutely, of what it means to dwell on earth in what she has identified as an age of earthly alienation. What thus sits at the forefront of Arendt's most widely read and most frequently cited book is a preoccupation with the (earthly) placedness of human beings.

Framing her discussion of the human condition, which serves not only as the book's title but as its central problematic, is this question of human placedness. Indeed, the book's central thesis regarding the threefold activities which correspond to the human condition, labour, work, and action, are each situated in relation to their placedness.[3] Arendt's discussions of world, space of appearance, the public, the household and, of course, the *polis* all position her as a modern thinker of political

[1] HC: 1.
[2] Arendt cites many of the popular responses to the satellite in the prologue, HC: 1-2.
[3] At its most simplistic this correspondence can be viewed in the following divisions: labour and earth, work and world, action and history. It is my contention however, that the relationships between each of these activities and spaces is far more complex, a complexity that is acknowledge by Arendt when she describes the integrity of reality as 'a web woven of earthly, organic, and human realities, by which has come into existence through the addition of infinite improbabilities' (PP: 112). Rather than persist with this simplistic correspondence then, I rely on the earth-world-history formulation to open up Arendt's writing and illuminate the intersecting flows of her placed account of the human condition.

space.[4] And yet, it is the condition of earthly placedness that I bring to the fore in this chapter, locating each of these spaces in realtion to their earthly condition. Echoing Arendt's return to earth in the prologue to *The Human Condition,* this chapter mediates space through the earthly lens of what I am calling Arendt's latent environmentalism and the unchosen condition of dwelling on earth.

In Arendt's interpretation of the three weeks that the Russian satellite Sputnik lingered amongst the stars, a shift took place on the earth below, prompting her to claim that this was an 'event second in importance to no other, not even to the splitting of the atom.'[5] What occurred at this moment for Arendt was a radical reconsideration of the earth: no longer home but the ground of departure. What first constituted a technological development thus became for Arendt a demand to rethink the earthly status of human beings, hence her appeal to think the human condition in terms of 'what we are doing.'[6] More than simply a provocation regarding the space of human dwelling, the launching of the satellite equally ignited the question of temporal existence, hence her remark on the conflict of 'earthly time' with that of the universe. Sputnik, this space dwelling object, served not only to index an encounter with the extra-terrestrial but with that unearthly time that defies the temporal conditions for life on earth. What Arendt perceived as the forsaking of human earthliness assumed a political tenor in her identification of worldly alienation: the loss of reality and, in many ways, an anticipation of what I detect in the exilic condition in Part III of this project.[7] Implicit to Arendt's claim regarding the coincidence of space travel and world alienation is an organising co-belonging of earth and world in the formation of the human condition. It is this affinity that organises my reading of Arendt in this chapter. In other words, my project turns on the claim that if space travel brings into question the stature of human beings, there must be something meaningful in the earthliness of humans that goes beyond the earth as the material locus of their dwelling. Arendt gestures to as much

[4] Many of these places appear as specific subsections in *The Human Condition* in their own right. Her discussions on the exclusion of slaves and refugees from their claim to place in the world, the refusal to admit cohabitation as a condition of politics, and the right to retreat from the public are all themes that appear throughout her writing. In addition to the invocations of physical place, Arendt's vocabulary is marked by the recurrent use of spatial metaphors, the gathering of a political community around a common table, the web of human relations, the construction of reality in speech. See, HC: 22-79; 175-188; 199-212. See also, Canovan, 1994: 99–154; Pitkin, 1998.
[5] Ibid.
[6] HC: 5.
[7] HC: 248-267.

when she writes that the earth is the 'quintessence of the human condition.'[8] Unpacking the meaning of this claim and building on the earlier schematic of placedness developed in relation to Heidegger, this chapter further clarifies the role of place in the human condition and its bearing on the earth-world-history constellation.

While I begin this chapter by returning to that canonical moment in Arendt's writing on the earth in relation to Sputnik in *The Human Condition,* the central thrust of my argument regarding the latent environmentalism in Arendt's politics occurs in sections 2.2 and 2.3 of this chapter. The second section of this chapter explores the depiction of the earth as it appears in the context of Arendt's more overtly political writings, highlighting those instances in which the earth appears as a condition for political appearance as such. What appears in equal measure here are those moments when attempts are made to qualify conditions for earthly appearance, moments which coincide in Arendt's writing with the antipolitical. In the final section I turn to focus directly on Arendt's political condition of human natality. Echoing the discussion of Dasein's historicity from Chapter One, here I interpret natality as a condition of historical renewal, moving between the endurance of the concealing earth and the unconcealing originality of spontaneous worldly action.

2.1 Sputnik: Leaving Home, Leaving Earth

Arendt's discussion of Sputnik is perhaps the most well-known instance in her work where she does take up questions of the earth and what it means to dwell on the earth. As I've already outlined in the introduction to this project however, the idea that this was the *only* place in which she discussed the earth is false. Arendt returns throughout her writing to the question of the earth and the role the earth has in giving shape and meaning to those political events and actions that unfold on its surface. Yet there is clearly something singular about the Sputnik event that marks it in Arendt's imagination. As already noted, she heralded it as an 'event second in importance to no other.' The specific topic of space travel reappears at several moments in her writing and the more general themes of human stature and the meaning of earthly dwelling form two of the central axes around which her broader

[8] HC: 2.

political project develops.[9] Part of Arendt's preoccupation with Sputnik emerged in view of the way in which it brought into question the meaning of human stature, a question that I contend is interchangeable with one of human placedness. In what follows, I offer a twofold reading of Sputnik drawn from two lines of the short yet rich five-page prologue to *The Human Condition*. Following the prologue so closely, my aim here is to qualify what constitutes an organising claim throughout this chapter, namely, this assertion that the question of human stature is a question of human placedness.

The human artifice of the world separates human existence from all mere animal environment, but life is itself outside this artificial world, and through life man remains related to all other living organisms.[10]

Part of the critique that Arendt stages in relation to Sputnik, and what I want to argue is implicit in this sentence, is directed towards its fractured ontology, namely, that its essential being does not exist beyond the limits of its own construction. By this I mean no more than to say that the meaning Arendt attributes to Sputnik is determined exclusively within the logic of its own unearthly claim to extra-territoriality. Sputnik bears no relation to the earth except insofar as it solicits a negation of the earth's hold on the plurality who dwell upon its surface. Bound neither to the earth's gravitational pull nor to the mortal limits of its history, Sputnik existed – if only for three weeks – as an unearthly entity. Rather than invite a celebration, Arendt received this moment as a patent confrontation with the quintessence of the human condition. What was challenged with the launch of Sputnik was the richness of meaning produced in the co-becoming of earth and world. Here, Arendt encountered meaning produced in relation to a notion of the world alone. And I want to resist thinking *the* worldliness of Sputnik here insofar as it refused to admit the earthly condition of worldly appearance. In this way, it appeared both as unearthly *and* unworldly. Invoking an image developed in Chapter One from Heidegger's discussion on the agonistic movement between earth and world, what Sputnik

[9] For an extended discussion on Sputnik and Arendt's engagement with the space question see Oliver, 2015: 96-101; Yaqoob, 2014.
[10] HC: 2.

refuted was the integrity of that relational scene in which the world – and with it the earth – become meaningful as the place of human dwelling. Arendt makes this point explicit in her claim that Sputnik was unable to remain connected to life itself. Without romanticising the meaning of this 'life,' what emerges in the opposition that Arendt sets up between 'life' and the 'artificial world' of production is the necessity for the latter to seek meaning beyond the limits of its own appearance.

The connection Arendt stages between humans and 'all other living organisms' invites an understanding of human being, that is, the being of being human, as intercut with the plurality of species and environments that give texture to the experience of earthly dwelling. This unchosen dimension of human existence remains a source of interrogation in Arendt's writing, both insofar as the human condition remains an epistemic and ontological provocation, unknowable and inexhaustible, and due to the continual arrival of new humans on earth. The political condition of natality that I will turn to more closely in section 2.3 recalls the unpredictable force of human appearance. Arendt's invocation of 'life' in the context of the prologue as the unknowable condition of connectedness echoes Heidegger's invocation of agonistic concealmeant. Where Heidegger denies the possibility of 'using up' the earth in order to attain greater proximity to the meaning of Dasein or the thereness of being, Arendt appeals to a sustained connection with the earthly quintessence of the human condition. To find meaning within this earthly nature is thus not to 'use up' the earth in pursuit of an ontologically bankrupt utilitarianism, yet nor is it for humanity to alienate itself from the earth and deny its necessary presence. To remain connected to the earth as the 'quintessence of the human condition,' action is called upon to continually wrest meaning anew from the earthly placedness of human appearance. And so, while it is clear that Sputnik existed both as a material entity and as an historical event, its meaning was coordinated as an absolute negation of the earth and hence of the human condition itself.

Margaret Canovan, whose introduction to *The Human Condition* provides rich commentary on Arendt's interpretation of Sputnik, describes the latter's encounter with the dawn of the space age as akin to a moment of crisis, in which the demonstration of human ability to transcend nature 'called

all natural limits into question.'[11] However, rather than provoke a renewed consideration of the human condition, this demonstration coincides with a second dawning: the rise in modern alienation. The rejection of the earth not simply as the dwelling place of all humans but as the place that conditions and makes life possible or, as Arendt writes 'harbours life itself,' distinguishes the alienating force of Sputnik. This point emerges on two fronts. On the one hand, the interpretation of Sputnik as the first step 'toward escape from men's imprisonment to the earth' produces a form of alienation intrinsic to physical placedness of humans on earth.[12] On the other, Arendt's claim is that alienation cannot simply be cast in physical terms but exists in relation to the very ontology of the human condition itself. In the prologue she makes this point clear by describing humans as 'earth-bound creatures' whose 'earthly nature' forms part of their fundamental condition. The consequences of alienation thus unfold not simply in relation to the literal placedness of human beings but in terms of their essential nature.

The way in which Sputnik becomes an ontological provocation regarding the human stature and inaugurates a form of alienation cannot be resolved simply by retelling the story of its appearance in relation to the earth. Recalling the fact that Sputnik was 'earth-born,' produced and manipulated out of ecological materiality and admitted only temporarily and tentatively to dwell among the stars before its return to earth does not suddenly recover its earthly nature.[13] What does clarify its alienation from the earth, however, is a return to the formulation developed in Chapter One that 'the earth earths as the world worlds.' Rather than two parallel processes of becoming, what this construction highlights is the indivisible oneness of earth and world, which move together in a state of reciprocal becoming or, to express this point with greater clarity, in a state of *co*-becoming. To further reiterate this claim in terms from the previous chapter, it is the pivotal 'as' that ties together these two places not only in time, and hence as occurring in the production of history, but as maintaining sustained recourse to one another in order to become/co-become. The appearance of Sputnik, which Arendt read as severing this bind, effectively denied the centripetal force of this 'as.' Indeed, in the prologue's

[11] Canovan, 1998: x.
[12] HC: 1.
[13] On the ecological materiality of technology, see Parikka, 2017.

opening paragraph she contrasts the 'earthly time' to which mortals are bound with the eternity of the universe. Setting up this opposition between two temporal spheres, Arendt gestures towards the temporal alienation that will be normalised if the earth recedes from view in ontological considerations of the human condition.

Advancing the view that Sputnik erodes the 'as' that brings earth and world into a state of co-becoming, Arendt brings into consideration a second earth-denying event: the production of life in the test tube. Establishing a common affinity between these two technological moments, Arendt argues that both can be interpreted as the refusal to embrace the necessary vulnerability of the human condition. What is instead made apparent in each of these moments is an attempt to realise the construction of a 'future man' who Arendt describes as 'possessed by a rebellion against human existence as it has been given.' The future man who appears in opposition to the earth-bound nature of human beings operates, like Sputnik, following conditions of his own making. For the future man the earth is thus recast as something 'which he wishes to exchange, as it were, for something he has made himself.'[14] The full force of this retreat from the earth becomes apparent later on in *The Human Condition* when Arendt introduces the threat of worldlessness.[15] It is sufficient here however, to simply point to the way in which Arendt's 'future man' is limited by his inability to operate beyond a system of his own making. If worldlessness as Arendt goes on to describe it corresponds to experience of being 'thrown back upon [oneself], concentrating upon nothing it [one's] own being alive' then it is this experience that is effectively realised in the genesis of the 'future man' who cannot see beyond the limits of his own self-ordained existence.[16] It is the launch of Sputnik that signals the possible realisation of this future, insofar as it is here that the bind between earth and world is weakened and the earth relegated an obstacle to the future man's realisation. This point is further clarified by Arendt in her discussion on political speech in the second half of the prologue. Indeed, it is in this section that she addresses the co-becoming of earth and world in history as sustaining the fabric of reality.

[14] HC: 2-3.
[15] On the dangers of worldlessness, see: Brient, 2000; Kohn, 2018.
[16] HC: 115.

…it could be that we, who are earth-bound creatures and have begun to act as though we were dwellers of the universe, will forever be unable to understand, that is, to think and speak about the things which nevertheless we are able to do.[17]

Beyond the refusal to concede the meaningful co-becoming of earth and world that constituted the first concern prompted by Sputnik, the second can be drawn from Arendt's discussion of how this fractured relation is made intelligible as a political phenomenon. That is to say, while the launching of Sputnik had immediate recourse to questions of temporality and space, the way in which Arendt explicates these as political questions signals the degree to which the launch confronted the limits of speech. If the intersection of earth and world constitute the place of human existence, it is via speech that this experience becomes political as such. With this in mind, Arendt describes the linguistic approach to Sputnik via mathematical formulae, which 'no longer lend themselves to normal expression in speech and thought' as denying something proper to its capacity to be interpreted in the context of politics.[18] The loss of speech as a point of entry into considerations of space travel – and its relation to the human condition – echoes her earlier reflections on the obfuscating speech of Nazi generals. One of the central points that Arendt made in her analysis on the rise of totalitarianism under the Nazis was its erosion of language.[19] Her contemporary, Victor Klemperer attributed the darkening of reality under the Nazis to the regime's 'brown sauce' or oozy, meaningless speech which reflected no more than the party's failed claim to meaning.[20] Arendt describes a similar scenario when she writes in the prologue that the realisation 'of life in which speech is no longer meaningful' will render the integrity of reality incomprehensible.[21] While the immediate implications of each consideration of speech are distinct, what is shared between Arendt's view of Sputnik and her and Klemperer's consideration of speech under totalitarianism is an attempt to dissolve the acuity of speech and its capacity to disclose meaning from the ordinary realisation of placedness.

[17] HC: 3.
[18] Ibid.
[19] William Spanos provides a rich overview of the way in which the vacuous language of political speech from Arendt's account of Nazi Germany to more recent examples in the United States, see: Spanos, 2012.
[20] See; Klemperer, 2013: 9-17, 195-207.
[21] HC: 4.

Without speech the meaning of Sputnik became, at the very least for Arendt, opaque. While she could clearly see it as an obstacle to the ongoing co-becoming of earth and world and hence to the very organisation of the human condition, it was the difficulty in finding a way of speaking about this event that struck her as a central concern. She puts this matter-of-factly in the prologue when she writes that 'wherever the relevance of speech is at stake, matters become political by definition, for speech is what makes man a political being.'[22] And so, while Arendt clearly saw that there was a way to reflect on the questions raised by Sputnik and did not, therefore fear the advent of space travel in any profound or paralysing sense, I do want to challenge claims such as those made by Dipesh Chakrabarty that Sputnik was a 'symbol of optimism' for her.[23] Chakrabarty's claim that Sputnik was a symbol for the 'survival of the human race' radically misconstrues what Arendt in fact saw as the possible disintegration of the human condition when faced with this speech-defying, unearthly and, insofar as politics is both earthly and speech dependent, quasi-antipolitical moment. Precisely because it could not be included within the paradigm of human earthliness, and hence the condition that precedes and endures as a frame of judgment, Sputnik signalled not optimism but the urgent need to think the world around us. As Arendt herself writes on the following page of the prologue: 'what I propose, therefore, is very simple: it is nothing more than to think what we are doing.'[24] Rather than celebrate the redemption of humanity from its earthly condition, Arendt thus sees this moment as the impetus to take up with renewed concern those conditions of human existence captured by the constellation earth-world-history.

Pushed beyond a realm of speech-based comprehension, Sputnik risked inaugurating a mode of 'worldly' being that refused recognition of those plural conditions that intersect to give meaning to the world. Again, it was alienation that Arendt identified as the consequence of this threat. Framing this concern in epistemic terms, Arendt argued that if the earth-bound nature of humanity were forgotten 'it would be as though our brain, which constitutes the physical, material condition of our thoughts, were unable to follow what we do, so that from now on we would indeed need artificial

[22] HC: 3.
[23] Chakrabarty, 2012: 15.
[24] HC: 5.

machines to do our thinking and speaking.'[25] Heeding this threat, Arendt moved to provoke her reader into a state of agitation, once again incorporating the tropes of agonistic reflection from Heidegger's writing. Challenging the realisation of the 'future man' she appealed to her reader's capacity to think, describing the concerns raised by Sputnik as political questions 'of the first order' and therefore unable to be left to the decision 'of professional scientists or professional politicians' alone.[26] Again, this point leads Arendt away from the optimism that Chakrabarty misidentifies towards a sustained concern for the human condition. The principal injunction of the book thus emerges in the prologue as the need to hold onto reality rather than be led astray by an embrace of technological 'progress.'[27] Taking up the claim to 'think what we are doing,' in the following section I move to think the placedness of our doing and its affinity to the earth-world-history constellation.

2.1 The Earthliness of Politics (and the unearthliness of totalitarianism)

Turning to uncover what I have called the 'latent environmentalism' or the earthliness of Arendt's politics, I want to begin by returning to several of the earthly references first outlined in the introduction to this thesis. Firstly, the opening sentence of the somewhat didactically entitled essay 'Introduction *into* Politics,' where she writes that politics is based on the fact '*men* are a human, earthly, product.'[28] Putting into abeyance the omission of an original gender difference here, the emphasis that Arendt places on an original plurality (*men* and not Man) as deriving from the earth forms an implicit challenge to ideas of the earth as synonymous with a reductive biological determinism. Moreover, the emphasis she places on the locative '*into'* invites a reading of the placedness of politics, as that *into* which an entry is made. Throughout my argument that latent in Arendt's work is a politics of environmentalism, is the grounding force of this thesis that the earth serves as both the condition and space of political placedness.

[25] HC: 3.
[26] Ibid.
[27] The second concern that organises the prologue is that of automation, described as a 'no less threatening event,' Arendt locates a similar danger here regarding the realisation of the 'future man' (HC: 4-5).
[28] PP: 93.

Building on this account of politics, Arendt introduces an explicitly 'earthly' account of politics in her discussion of plurality in *The Human Condition.* While the definition of plurality, one of Arendt's twofold political categories, most commonly cited from the text centres on its unrepeatable singularity and in so doing immediately recalls the unpredictable spontaneity of natality, Arendt's other political condition, a second definition of plurality is offered. Indeed, on the page before what might be considered the favoured definition of plurality, namely that 'we are all in the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live' Arendt defines plurality as 'the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit to world.'[29] Recalling the force of her earlier account of politics in the 'Introduction *into* Politics' essay, this defintion of plurality reinforces the political conditions that arise from the fact of human earthliness. Indeed, the full force of this definition attains to a particular clarity in her final work, *The Life of the Mind.* Entering *into* the political earth towards which she gestured in 'Introduction *into* Politics' here she describes plurality as 'the law of the earth.'[30] It is in these moments that the organising coordinates of Arendt's latent environmentalism can be found.

The force of Arendt's comments on the intersection of plurality and the earth is apparent in the stark critique that they yield on the violence of genocide and the politics of sovereignty. Locating the foundation of human difference in the context of the earth provides Arendt with the basis on which to affirm the right to appear in place as the right to appear in one's singular otherness. This simultaneous affirmation of difference and place highlights the originality of her 'recovery' of the Aristotelian categories of political appearance.[31] Rather than simply resurrect the Athenian *polis* and its attendant conditions of exclusion and dependence upon a necessary exploitation of the other (women, slaves, and barbarians), Arendt's account of difference as always emerging in place centres the unchosen condition of commonalty in difference as an earthly condition. The appearance of the *polis* or the political space of appearance in Arendt's work is thus inextricable from the conditions set out by the earth itself, namely difference and the right to appear in place. The force of this argument is

[29] HC: 9, 8.
[30] LMT: 19.
[31] See Villa, 1995:3.

put into practice by Arendt in her confrontation with Adolf Eichmann. Challenging the hubris of the Nazi ideology which presumed itself 'ordained to reorder the conditions for earthly appearance,' in Arendt's address to Eichmann she invokes the law of earthly plurality.[32]

As though speaking directly to him, when Arendt wrote her report on his trial in Jerusalem, she was emphatic that it was Eichmann's support for a regime that sought to determine 'who could and could not inhabit the earth' that meant that no one could be expected to want to share the earth with him.[33] Appealing to the earth as the ground of human plurality and hence as intrinsic to the conditions for political appearance as such, Arendt's judgment of Eichmann coincides with the development of her latent environmentalism. Moreover, what is clear in this move between earth, politics, and judgment is the way in which questions of the earth are relevant not only to concerns for the 'environment' or some romantic ideal of 'nature' but are pertinent to the question of politics more broadly. Judith Butler offers further clarification here, noting that what Eichmann failed to realise was that 'no one has the prerogative to choose with whom to cohabit the earth.'[34] Implicit to this interpretation of the crimes against humanity committed by the Nazi party is their transgression of the 'unchosen character of earthly cohabitation' – a cohabitation that I want to reconfigure in terms of the politics of earthly placedness. Indeed, anticipating the political force that I ascribe to this condition of placedness, Butler concludes her argument with the claim that it is this form of cohabitation that serves as 'the condition of our very existence as ethical and political beings.'[35]

Whether she was aware of it or not, Arendt's latent environmentalism continued to develop in her attempts to understand the particular violence and inhumanity that unfolded under Nazi totalitarianism. In the preface to *The Origins of Totalitarianism* she describes the way in which, after this violence, 'human dignity needs a new guarantee which can be found only in a new political principle, *in a new law on earth*, whose validity this time must comprehend the whole of humanity.' [36] Frantz Fanon similarly appeals to the as-yet unfulfilled realisation of human dignity at the end of *The*

[32] EJ: 279
[33] Ibid.
[34] Butler, 2012a: 143.
[35] Ibid.
[36] OT: xi, (emphasis added).

Wretched of the Earth, where he writes that 'humanity expects other things from us' than the grotesque perpetuation of a European logic of exclusion.[37] Where Fanon solicits pioneers who might attain to this humanity, precisely insofar as they might depart from the monopoly of European logic toward a political pluralism, Arendt appeals to plurality as the law of the earth. What is clear in both instances is the need to develop a form of human dignity central to which is the right-to-placedness or, more specifically the right to assume place on the earth and build up a structural world in which the original political conditions of life on earth might be realised. For Arendt, part of this need to affirm the plurality of the earth as a condition for politics and the construction of worlds generally hinges on the recognition that the inhumane violence of the European Holocaust was not exclusively an instance of anti-Semitism perpetrated on the Jewish body alone, but was an attack on the unchosen fact of earthly plurality. This culminates with Arendt's claim in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* that what is at stake under totalitarian violence is 'human nature as such.'[38]

Achille Mbembe describes a similar loss of clarity regarding the spaces of experience in the overspill of colonial logic to rewrite worldly conditions the world over. In light of this, part of his development of a critique of colonial structures in the 21st century hinges on the identification of the 'planetarization of the world,' one that he argues unfolds under the aegis of 'militarism and capital and, in ultimate consequences, a time of exit from democracy (or of its inversion).'[39] The loss of the agonal strife of earth-world-history co-being under the imposition of planetary worlds forecloses the potential for worldly disclosure that coincides with the realisation of plurality as the law of the earth. Mbembe continues by developing a spatialised account of his critique of modernity in which he follows a 'transversal approach, attentive to the three motifs of opening, crossing, and circulation.'[40] Arendt assumes a similarly 'transversal approach,' when she sources her own path to overcome what can be read as the planetary threat posed by totalitarianism via a return to the earth. Pushing at the depth of human plurality, that law of the earth that the Nazis had sought to requalify, Arendt located

[37] Fanon, 2004: 239
[38] OT: 601.
[39] Mbembe, 2019: 9. Arendt makes a similar point in the final chapter of *The Human Condition,* in which she discusses world alienation emerging in tandem with the 'closing-in of the earth,' see HC: 250.
[40] ibid

an opening in the condition of natality. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* she began to shape the contours of natality as the groundwork of human miracles, developing this claim explicitly in *The Human Condition* seven years later.[41]

Frustrating Mbembe's image of a 'time of democratic exit' with the temporal opening established by natality, Arendt's first depiction of natality in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* appears in the context of space, namely that 'with each new birth, a new beginning is born into the world, [and so] a new world has potentially come into being.'[42] The world that is disclosed with each new birth reaffirms the revolutions of the earth-world through history. Pushing at this intersection further it becomes apparent that each birth coincides with the reaffirmation of the earth. Indeed, what is foreshadowed in Arendt's account of natality's appearance *into* the world is plurality's appearance *out of* the earth seven years later when she writes *The Human Condition* and defines plurality as corresponding to the fact that men 'life on the earth.'[43] Before I move to discuss the earthliness of natality in closer detail in section 2.3, I want to explore the latent environmentalism of Arendt's rejection of sovereignty.

Building on the shared and unchosen condition of earthly cohabitation, Arendt's rejection of sovereignty hinges on the way in which the renewal of earth and world are inherently plural projects. What thus appears in her writing on political action is the continual reaffirmation of that original fact of earthly plurality: to act politically is to affirm both the plurality of politics and its earthly placedness. She describes the 'very notion of one sovereign force ruling the whole earth, holding the monopoly of all means of violence, unchecked and uncontrolled by other sovereign powers' as 'the end of all political life as we know it.' [44] Against the oppressive confines of earthly sovereignty, as in the claim to sovereignty attempted by the Nazi party, her political concepts are based on 'plurality, diversity, and mutual limitations.'[45] While the earth thus imposes itself in part as a liminal condition,

[41] OT: 629, see Totsching, 2017.
[42] OT: 611.
[43] HC: 7.
[44] MDT: 81.
[45] MDT: 81.

human life requires the provision of air for instance, it equally grounds the conditions of natal diversity that precede each disclosive act into the plurality of worldly appearance.[46]

This intersection of the earthly and the manmade is evident in the opening citation to this chapter. Reflecting on the status of reality, Arendt writes 'what we call real is already a web which is woven of earthly, organic, and human realities, but which has come into existence through the addition of infinite improbabilities.'[47] The reality of worldly freedom, which is merely another way of describing the reality of politics, is maintained in this interwoven relationship with the primordiality of the earth and its unfolding in connection to the world. Not only does the earth thus precede worldly being as the material ground of appearance, it also reveals the ontological conditions for political appearance, namely the irreducibility of individuals and the unpredictability of their appearance as such. To be of the earth prior to acts of disclosure 'in the world' is already to exist as a latent individual and distinct actor. When Arendt then connects the ontological depth of earthly plurality with natality as the original disclosure of this difference, she establishes a link between the twofold political space of earth and world. And yet, in her appeal to think the intrinsic originality of natal appearances Arendt rearticulates Heidegger's concern with the historicity of Dasein. This much is clear when she describes natality, which I introduced in the introduction as both the *condition* of human beginning inscribed at birth and the *faculty* of beginning attested to in original acts of beginning (what Arendt refers to as the 'second birth'), as creating 'the conditions for remembrance, that is, for history.'[48] What begins to emerge as central to Arendt's project of politics and the underpinning ontology of political being then is a concern with the realisation of natality and plurality as innately earthly. And yet, in as much as her project confirms a patent concern with the space of being, collapsing it into a form of biopolitical management would be to miss the expansive depth of her earth-world-history constellation.

[46] Heidegger makes a similar point in *Being and Time;* 'the earth of the homeland is not simply a space delimited by exterior frontiers, a natural region, a locality *(Ortlichkeit)* destined to be a scene for this and that to take place. The earth which is the homeland is readied for the gods' (GA39, 104). Oxford Maxwell ed. reference
[47] PP: 112.
[48] HC: 9; 176.

If we follow this premise, that the convergence of earth and world relies upon the disclosive force of plural encounters in order to assume meaning historically, then a clear link between the meaning of life as such and earth-world-history becomes apparent. Returning to the central role of people to give texture to the placed fact of being, Arendt stresses the necessity of communities when she writes that 'only within the framework of a people can a man live as a man among men, without exhausting himself.'[49] She makes this point at various stages in her writing, developing it fully in her account of the non-sovereignty of human being. But these arguments for the communality of being are grounded throughout in appeals to the earth. And so, beyond setting up a paradigmatic space of intelligibility, earth and world become meaningful as place as the earth-world-history constellation in which action is realised. When Villa describes the Heideggerian world as something that is 'not originally "beheld," but is dwelled in' he provides an account that might be thought interchangeably with the space that is Arendt's plural politics. Indeed, when Arendt quotes Nicias in Thucydides' *Peloponnesian Wars* that 'wherever you go, you will be a *polis,'* she is quick to clarify that this capacity to disclose a political space is only ever a potential.[50] Hence, 'this space does not always exist' but hangs on the guarantee provided by the presence of other humans for whom it appears.[51] Or, to finish the earlier reference to the framework of a people, she continues 'only when a people lives and functions in consort with other people can it contribute to the establishment *upon earth* of a commonly conditioned and controlled humanity.'[52] To be a *polis* thus requires the admission of that original earthly law of plurality into its foundation.

Unpacking this qualification regarding the conditioned framework of humanity opens up Arendt's account of politics to a project of earthly preservation as well as recognising the force of intergenerational claims. Or, recalling Heidegger's project of earthly disclosure, 'the earth itself, then, is not our home until we make it home.'[53] The purposive drive that Arendt locates in the earth extends beyond the conditions manifest for survival: that humans eat, drink, stay warm, and have shelter.

[49] JW: 297.
[50] HC: 198.
[51] HC: 199
[52] JW: 279, emphasis added.
[53] Oliver, 2015: 74.

Remaining bound by these conditions is described by Arendt in terms of the *animal laborans.* Arendt makes this argument more pointedly in reference to the slave body who is reduced to their earthly status, 'condemned' as Mbembe says 'to live.'[54] Certainly, the earth lays out literal material conditions that inform the needs of worldly individuals, hence the position of the *animal laborans;* the very embodiment of mere human earthliness, the subject who is never free from earthly want and whose life is subsequently dictated by the necessity of hunger, thirst and shelter. Yet, insofar as it is precisely *not* the satiation of earthly need in the feeding, clothing, and sheltering of the *animal laborans* that they assume a properly human life that the ontological depth of the earth becomes apparent.

Arendt's insistence then that politics is based on the fact of earthly existence signals a depth beyond mere animality ascribable to the earth. It is thus too simplistic to describe the earth as a 'limit condition on the world,' limiting movement and resources.[55] The earth resonates not least as the quintessence of biological life, where it might indeed be thought as a limit condition, but as the expansive ground for political worlding – a project that builds upon the historicity of Dasein to create original historical conditions out of the fact – or expansive place – of being. Establishing this point merely reaffirms the original co-being of the earth-world-history constellation as it pertained to Heidegger's writing. The severance of the triadic space of being, where the earth would become meaningful to the extent that its material conditions are met, is overcome via the return to plurality as 'the law of the earth.'[56] When Arendt thus identified totalitarian lawfulness as pretending to 'have found a way to establish the rule of justice on earth' it was precisely plurality as the law of the earth that it had infringed upon.[57] What we see then again is the severance of the triadic constellation, apparent here in the claim over earthly conditions by the worldly mandate of totalitarianism.

[54] Mbembe describes the status of the slave in the Atlantic Slave Trade as one 'Imprisoned in the dungeon of appearance, they came to belong to others who hated them. They were deprived of their own names and their own languages. Their lives and their work were from then on controlled by the others with whom they were condemned to live, and who denied them recognition as cohumans.' CBR: 2.
[55] Oliver, 2015: 75.
[56] LMT: 19.
[57] OT: 606.

Grasping the implications of Arendt's claim that plurality is the law of the earth and the contingent anti-sovereign foundation of freedom can be found in the political reflections of Audre Lorde. When Lorde writes in the now eminently quotable essay 'The Master's Tools' that 'difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic,' she evinces Arendt's thesis that freedom can only by expressed within the logic of a plurality.[58] With statements like these the links between Arendt and a school of thinking like Lorde's are clear. Precisely because the 'ontological fact of plurality prevents us from remaining masters of our action,' the disclosure and affirmation of new beginnings depends upon the richness and solidity provided by the forces of reciprocal appearance and plural recognition.[59] A similar celebration of anti-sovereign freedom can be found in Mbembe's description of Fanon: 'Fanon grasped his own life only by understanding the life of other living and nonliving beings, for only then did he himself exist as a living form, and only then could he rectify the asymmetry of relations and introduce into them a dimension of reciprocity and care for humanity.'[60] Mbembe's identification of an asymmetry echoes the intersection of intergenerational communities who, to borrow from the vocabulary of Adriana Cavarero, incline upon one another in states of dependence and exposed vulnerability.[61] Implicit here as well is the connection to life that Arendt first discerned in her reading of Sputnik, namely, that it is outside the world of human artifice that connections to life are found.

Cognisant of this dependence of life on forces outside the sovereign limits of the self, both Arendt and Lorde locate in acts of plural and worldly being, namely acts of original and reciprocal disclosure, the necessity of individual courage. Hence, where Lorde speaks of the 'courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters,' Arendt turns to courage as an intergenerational and historical force.[62] Hence, courage as 'indispensable because in politics not life but the world is at stake.'[63] The ambiguity of Arendt's reference to life here – whether individual life or the capacity to create life – skews her account away from a project of the necro or biopolitical subject towards a

[58] Lorde, 2017: 90.
[59] Axtmann, 2006: 100.
[60] Mbembe, 2019: 5.
[61] ICR
[62] Lorde, 207: 91.
[63] BPF: 155.

notion of politics that is always already intercut with the earth as a plural and intergenerational space. Both Lorde and Arendt are indebted to a relational model that positions difference as prior to political appearance and, in turn, political action as dependent upon the realisation of difference. Susan Bickford describes Arendt and Lorde's shared concern with courage as operative in overcoming the fear that exists in the need to establish allegiances in what is an otherwise plural world.[64]

Holding onto the difference of plurality as affording a form of security in resolute and irreducible difference, Arendt and Lorde depict a political ontology the fulfilment of which coincides with a reaffirmation of its underlying premise. Hence, 'Lorde insists that difference is our greatest strength in the struggle for another, better world. She demands that we neither negate difference nor conceptualise it as something that puts people against one another.'[65] Like Arendt, Lorde locates in human plurality the sources of new beginnings. Pushing the ground of this difference and locating in the earth the nascent condition of human plurality, natality, and hence, politics itself, a paradigm shift occurs in what it means to think the space of the earth politically. In other words, when Arendt argues in *The Life of the Mind,* that 'plurality is the law of the earth,' setting up an political and earthly paradigm she clarifies the Augustinian claim that 'because man *is* a beginning, man can begin,' that was so central to the formation of her account of natality.[66]

Beginning is now to be understood as the affirmation of earth, or rather an interweaving of the earthly and human that coincides as earth-world-history. With this reappraisal of the natal subject as an earthly subject, Arendt's claim that 'to be human and to be free are one and the same,' serves as an invocation of the freedom inherent to earthly dwelling.[67] What Arendt points towards with this conjunction is the inhumanity that coincides with the attempt to qualify or recondition earthly life. Imprisonment thus becomes more than the negation of rights but the negation of that innate right to appear that coincides with being born on the earth. Without becoming an essentialist claim, Arendt's positioning of the earth as the ground on which radical beginnings are made and latterly sustained, the earth enters into a dialogue on what it means to appear and to appear as free. She thus describes the

[64] Bickford, 1995: 330
[65] Hark and Villa, 2020: 132.
[66] LMT: 19.
[67] BPF: 166.

lives of those imprisoned in Nazi Death Camps as 'removed from earthly purpose.'[68] Unable to realise the twofold political conditions of natality and plurality, what transpired in these unearthly spaces was the attempt to essentialise earthly life and render it mere existence. Arendt's redemption of earthly life via natality challenges both the limits of what it means to dwell on the earth while simultaneously opening up space in which to rethink the project of earthly life in and of itself.

If the earth can thus begin to be thought as something intrinsic to Arendt's account of worldly politics, it is possible to see how a reconditioning of the earth, as in the reconditioning force of the Anthropocene, radically alters what it means to think 'the political.' The declaration of the Anthropocene, however, as a novel iteration of the earth is ontologically distinct to the revolutions of the earth-world in the agonal strife of Heidegger's appeal to the space of disclosure or Arendt's project of worldly politics as grounded in the plural condition of the earth and the historicity of natality. The Anthropocene signals that the earth can no longer be thought in terms of its co-being alongside the constellating spaces of world and history. What is apparent here is a form of severance by way of a complete negation of the relational binds that hold each together as a manifold unity. That is to say, when the ontological limits no longer exist between earth-world-history, where each comes into being not as an encounter of ontological disclosure but as forced into appearance as the earth of human production for instance, the agonal strife of co-being is lost. While Arendt's fear that the blurring of the public *polis* with the private household would result in the rise of the social, the 'blob' that culminates in the colonization of political discourse by the economic drives of neo-liberalism, the collapse of earth-world-history signals a new erosion to the space of politics.[69]

The specific threat discernible in the blob of earth-world-history in the Anthropocene is the loss of relational agonism in the development of political projects. The loss of the earth as a space of unknown concealment out of which worlds might be constructed threatens the concomitant loss of an alternate project of beginning. In other words, where Lorde rejects the possibility of the master's tools being used to dismantle the master's house, the Anthropocene looms as a new iteration of the master's house built out on the exclusionary systems of colonialism, the dismantling of which is made possible

[68] OT: 583.
[69] See Pitkin, 1998.

only be a rethinking of the ground that the house supposes to have totalized. I will confront this problem in Part III.

Returning to Arendt's project of anti-sovereign politics, in which freedom operates in the locale of human plurality, I want to turn in the final section to the earthliness of natality, suggesting that it is natality's unpredictable disruption of the world that presents a possible form of resistance to the continued practice of Lorde's violent tools. Indeed, the intersection of natality and plurality allows for a reading of natality as the realisation *and renewal* of the 'law of the earth.' Resisting conformity, reading natality in this way highlights the potential it has to allows the earth to be wrested once again from concealment and shown as the productive and expansive ground of political action.

2.3 …the fact that we are born *into* earth-world-history

The title of this subsection presents a play on Arendt's definition of natality as the fact that 'we are *born* into the world.'[70] In the previous two sections I have argued that the connection between earth and world cannot be reduced to nature/culture nor to essentialist sovereign grounds but that, like Heidegger, Arendt presents an account of earth and world as bound together in a common co-being. The 'oneness' that defines Heidegger's placed construction the 'fourfold' thus reappears in Arendt's discussion on the intersection of earth and world in moments of political action. The placedness of action which allows for the meaningful co-being of earth and world to appear was thus denied in the 'unearthly' violence of totalitarianism. The mute violence of this period to which Arendt was witness thereby threatened to erode the very integrity of reality itself, moving, in this way, radically past the threat to speech as it was announced in the prologue to *The Human Condition.* What was thus brought to a critical point in totalitarianism was Arendt's understanding of reality as always 'already a web which is woven of earthly, organic, and human realities, but which has come into existence through the addition of infinite improbabilities.'[71] These 'improbabilities' emerge out of the radical unpredictability that is human life, the 'beginning' that is disclosed both in the birth of humans and in the form of their actions. When Arendt recognises the spontaneity of human appearance on earth and

[70] BPF: 176.
[71] PP: 112.

what I will come in Chapter Four to think in terms of the messianic renewal of the world in action, she begins to invoke something of that Heideggerian historicity that I discussed in Chapter 1.3.

Indeed, where Heidegger discusses Dasein's futural being, Arendt describes the worldliness of intergenerational connections. The threat of worldlessness that I first discussed in relation to Sputnik and then totalitarianism emerges once again as a political phenomenon when the assumption is made 'that the world will not last.' As Arendt writes, 'on this assumption…it is almost inevitable that worldlessness in one form or another, will begin to dominate the political scene.'[72] Without the guarantee of future generations and their inheritance of the world as it is constructed in action, the very meaning of that world disintegrates. Beyond the way in which this argument clearly implicates the future in the present and hence recalls the inauthenticity of thinking time as the ontically distinct spaces past, present, and future, what is apparent here is the placedness of action's beginning. Or rather, insofar as worldlessness is resisted that mode of resistance coincides with the (re)production of earth and world for the sake of posterity. [73] Arendt argues this much herself in the essay 'The Crisis in Education' where she describes the confrontation between the placedness of the human condition and the renewal of the condition in each new generation. Framing her discussion in terms of the responsibility to preserve the world and maintain it as a space that might be renewed through original realisations of the placedness of being, she recalls the danger from Sputnik of losing hold of political speech and forgoing the historicity and futural-quality of action. To quote her at length:

> What concerns us all and cannot therefore be turned over to the special science of pedagogy is…our attitude towards the fact of natality: the fact that we have all come into the world by being born and that this world is constantly renewed through birth. Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable.'[74]

[72] HC: 54.
[73] See, HC: 55, 68, 137, 198.
[74] BPF: 193.

Appealing to a sense of common responsibility, Arendt ties education to a form of placedness. Before losing hold of the earth in this account of place, it need only be recalled that what gives depth to the world is its relationship to the earth and way in which meaning is disclosed in their co-being.

The 'realness' of that 'world' into which we are born thus comes into being via the interwoven spaces of earth, world, and history. The play then, that natality is defined as the fact that we are born *into* the world, moves Arendt's original emphasis from the fact of birth as the signifier of spontaneous originality – that we are *born* as beginners– to the locative fact that we are born *into* place. This transformation of birth from an abstract event to one that occurs *in place* is central to my argument that the meaning of birth is inextricably linked to the condition of human placedness. The argument that I advance throughout this section is that to-be-born is to be born-in-place, elevating the fact of place to a central and primordial condition in considerations of natality and instrumental to the claims throughout Part II that natality coincides with the right-to-placedness.

Arendt makes multiple references towards the placedness of natality throughout her writing. Indeed, insofar as the notion of natality itself lacks a firm placeholder in her work, assuming presence as the central conviction that humans are born to begin, the proximity she establishes between action and place is an indication of the placedness of natality. And so, while I will explore the immediate links between natality and place, specifically in reference to the 'earthly' place of being, throughout this section, it is her oblique references to natality's realisation as occurring in place that gives force to my claim. For instance, an explicit connection between natality and place can be read in the opening line to 'Introduction *into* Politics' where she writes that 'politics is based on the fact of human plurality. God created *man,* but *men* are a human, earthly product, the product of human nature.'[75] Gesturing towards the overlapping spaces of earth, world, and history here, the connection between earth and the worldliness of politics acts a further qualification of the way in which the constellation earth-world-history precedes natality as the place of its being. In a less immediate yet still resonant invocation of natality's claim to place, her remarks in 'Understanding and Politics' invoke the question of the earth as the locus of historical being, hence 'if we want to be at home on

[75] BPF: 93.

this earth, even at the price of being at home in this century, we must try to take part in the interminable dialogue with the essence of totalitarianism.'[76] Binding herself to earth and history, Arendt realises the latent quality of natality as the condition of historical remembrance.

Before I explore these links between natality and place, recalling that it is natality that saves the 'world from ruin' and in which 'the faculty of action is ontologically rooted,' groundings that serve as a poignant reminder to the placedness of natality, I want to return to the most common depiction of natality as coeval with humans as beginnings as such.[77] At its most straightforward, it is this capacity to begin that defines natality. Taken over from Augustine's claim that 'with the creation of man, the principle of beginning came into the world itself,' natality enters into Arendt's thinking as early as her doctoral thesis in 1929 and remains central to her political vocabulary, assuming a prominent position thirty years later in the publication of *The Human Condition*.[78] Yet, even with the emphasis Arendt places on an Augustinian account of beginning, and the apparent simplicity of natality as interchangeable with a notion of original beginning, its exact political valence remains opaque.

When it was introduced as a standalone political concept in *The Human Condition* the notion of natality operated, at least implicitly, as a challenge. A challenge first and foremost to a tradition of Western thought that had seen mortality and the centrality of (masculine) honour to which it gave rise – honour in battle, honour in death, honour in memory – natality also elevated questions of female experience – birth, labour, childrearing – typically deemed (even by Arendt) as alien to considerations of the political. The provocation of natality, not simply to think in terms of the human potential to begin but to position that potential in terms of the exposed vulnerability of childbirth has recourse beyond the limits of its apparent metaphoric depiction in Arendt's writing. Indeed, it is the ambivalent status that natality has within Arendt's writing, both as the central category of political thought and as the apparent metaphorical basis for the 'second birth,' the moment 'in which we confirm and take

[76] EU: 323.
[77] HC: 247.
[78] HC: 177.

upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance,' that contributes to its diverse, if somewhat contradictory application.[79]

Lisa Guenther describes the way that not only does the equation of natality in the event of birth elide ontological inquiry but 'when it is mentioned, it is often transformed in a metaphorical process of artistic or intellectual creation which is implicitly or explicitly coded as masculine.'[80] Wolfhart Totsching identifies a broad section of Arendt scholarship which engages in precisely such metaphorical reductions of natality.[81] Of the many remarks made about the obscure use of natality in Arendt's writing, Fanny Söderbäck, while tuned to the underlying question of natality's role in her work, also accuses Arendt of saying 'notoriously little of the concept;' John Kiess refers to it as her 'most important, if least understood, contribution to political theory,' yet it is Miguel Vatter who asks the judicious question: 'if Arendt's political thought is so "anti-biological," then why does she root human freedom in birth?'[82] Relishing this opacity, Adriana Cavarero reminds us that Arendt's refusal to further illuminate natality 'at least has the advantage of putting a somewhat unusual theme at our disposal.'[83] Rather than baffle her readers then, natality invites speculation. Responding to the clarity sought by Kiess and the problematic raised by Vatter, Cavarero's reading is distinct both in the manner that it avoids metaphorization and in the way that it develops a hermeneutics that surpasses the original text towards a far broader ethical project, one that I will aim to recreate throughout this project but specifically in Part II.

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[79] HC: 176. The quasi-paradoxical status of natality, as the foundation of human beginning is also conditioned by its dependence on the maternal body. Rooted in the biological labour of the maternal subject, natality evinces both the dependence and vulnerability of labour, infancy, and care, and the miraculous unpredictability of original action. While Arendt emphasises the radicality of the latter, she rejects discussions on the specificity of the maternal experience. Indeed, where natality is heralded as the central category of political though in which action is ontologically rooted, the labour of domestic care is relegated to the realm of the apolitical. And yet, in spite of these seemingly definitive distinctions on the conditions from which natality is realised, much has been made of what can rightly be considered a notion underdeveloped by Arendt. On natality and rights, see Beiner, 1984; Birmingham, 2006; 2007; Parekh, 2004. On natality and feminism, see Benhabib, 2000; Honig, 1992; Jantzen, 1999; Willard, 2015. On natality and subjecthood, see Butler, 2005; Cavarero, 2000; Kristeva, 2001. On natality and action, see Kampowski, 2008; Schott, 2010.
[80] Guenther, 2008: 99.
[81] Totsching, 2017: 330. See; Beiner 1984; Biss, 2012; Bowen-Moore 1989; Brunkhorst 1999; Dietz 2002; Tassin 2003.
[82] Söderbäck, 2018: 274; Kiess, 2016: 40; Vatter, 2006: 138.
[83] Cavarero, 2014: 17.

One of the earliest thinkers to seriously engage natality as a political resource, namely not simply as the groundwork for metaphorical abstractions on the capacity to begin, Patricia Bowen-Moore, describes the way in which natality inverts the enigma described by T. S. Eliot that 'we had the experience but missed the meaning.'[84] What eludes comprehension in the case of natality is the specificity of the experience itself; what is lost is its integrity, the actors who give it meaning and perhaps most of all, the unqualifiable connections shared between mother and child who are brought into ineliminable union. Guenther captures the perplexity of this event when she identifies the a-temporality of birth, of this event that 'slips away from me at the same time that it makes me.'[85] Drawing attention to the complex of actors whose presence affirms not merely their role as passive witnesses but as those who make the event, Anne O'Byrne writes that:

> the temporality of natality is such that I am with others before I can grasp that I am and who I am as a finite being. The origin from which I am removed is certainly mine, but it also belongs in an important sense to others. Our coming to be is therefore never a singular or solitary emerging into being; it is always, from the very start, a matter of plurality.[86]

Here again the words of Benjamin come to mind, of an origin which 'is not intended to describe the process by which the existent came into being, but rather to describe that which emerges from the process of becoming and disappearance,' the origin of natality is the emergence of meaning between those present at birth.[87] Unable to be remembered, the moment of birth becomes a locus of speculation; or rather, insofar as it resists remembrance, it enjoins a mode of engagement that passes over the specificity of natality as an event.

Where Cavarero will contend with this withdrawal of natality from the immediacy of memory as she concretizes the event and recentres the role of the maternal figure, it is equally clear that to be born is to be born-in-place. Rather than remain focused on Arendt's stipulation that we are 'born into

[84] Bowen-Moore, 1989: 135.
[85] Guenther, 2008: 3.
[86] O'Byrne, 2010: 106.
[87] OGTD: 45.

the world,' I want to move to think the earthliness of that world and, in so doing, recall the constellation of earth-world-history. Anticipating Cavarero's critique of Kantian rectitude in Chapter Three, I want to go beyond reiterating that humans are an earthly product, and develop the placedness of natality insofar as it was undermined in the earth and natality denying events of totalitarianism. The entanglement between the earth and natality during totalitarianism, in particular within the 'unearthly' spaces of the death camp mentioned in section 2.2, bring into harsh perspective Arendt's claim in *The Human Condition* that 'a life without speech and without action…is literally dead to the world.'[88] Written in this context to emphasize the necessary plurality of life, Arendt's point is neither hyperbolic nor exclusionary. Highlighting the givenness and potential of all humans, once again to parse Augustine because *all* humans are born to begin, Arendt's announcement reinforces the claim that a worldly life coincides with the fulfilment of an earthly life.

To speak of a life that is literally dead to the world is a way of saying that those lives which are, in Mbembe's words 'condemned to live,' cannot be understood to 'literally' live in any meaningful sense.[89] Mute to the world and rendered speechless, those lives condemned to live within the unearthly spaces of totalitarian death camps reaffirm the constellation of earth-world-history as the locus of human being. Namely, insofar as life is irreducible to its purely earthly form, to the conditions set out by mere biological necessity, earth-world-history resounds as the place proper to human life. Advancing the claim that what occurred in the death camp was both a denial of natality *and* the earthliness of being, I want to argue for their necessary interarticulation. Namely, that attempts to qualify the individual placedness in earth-world-history coincides with the attempt to qualify human natality and hence limit the integrity of politics itself. This synonymy, while posed here in terms of a mutual disavowal, effectively answers the question of what it means to be born-in-place. In the following chapter, I will frame this equation positively, via the notion of the right-to-placedness.

While natality had already emerged in Arendt's writing in her doctoral dissertation in 1929, the renewed application that it underwent in light of European totalitarianism radically transformed its

[88] HC: 176.
[89] CBR: 2.

scope as a political force, creating the path towards its promotion in *The Human Condition* to the 'central category' of her political thought.[90] In the preface to *The Origins of Totalitarianism* Arendt sketched out the injunction to which the book would respond:

> Antisemitism (not merely the hatred of Jews), imperialism (not merely conquest), totalitarianism (not merely dictatorship) – one after the other, one more brutally than the other, have demonstrated that human dignity needs a new guarantee which can be found only in a new political principle, in a new law on earth, whose validity this time must comprehend the whole of humanity while its power must remain strictly limited, rooted in and controlled by newly defined territorial entities.[91]

By the book's final page this principle has been found in the promise of beginning. She thus concludes the book:

> But there remains also the truth that every end in history necessarily contains a new beginning; this beginning is the promise, the only 'message' which the end can ever produce. Beginning, before it becomes a historical event, is the supreme capacity of man; politically, it is identical with man's freedom. *Initium ut esset homo creates est* – "that a beginning be made man was created," said Augustine. This beginning is guaranteed by each new birth; it is indeed every man.[92]

Beyond a source of metaphorical abstraction, the force of beginning ascribed at birth provides Arendt with the guarantee upon which a new account of human dignity could be founded. That the crime to which she had been witness had attempted to qualify the rights to earthly appearance by denying natal

[90] HC: 9.
[91] OT: xi.
[92] OT: 629.

spontaneity, it was in the convergence of these two conditions for political action that Arendt grounded her new ideal of human dignity.

At a fundamental level, Arendt's response to totalitarianism progressed following an inversion of the ideology's logic. Where totalitarianism found strength in ends, in the prescription of finitude to existence and the deprivation of human natality, its spontaneity and singularity, Arendt saw potential in beginnings. Put otherwise, insofar as totalitarianism sought 'to deprive life of the existence of singular human beings' a negation which coincided with the deprivation of life's 'natality, of its chance to be free,' the injunction in responding to the death camp was to recover meaning in the condition of being born, in the condition of life's ontological relationality.[93] This is the task to which *The Origins of Totalitarianism* attained and it is the task that guided Arendt's subsequent writing, achieving a singular clarity in the treatise of *The Life of the Mind* that 'plurality is the law of the earth.'[94] Tracing the steps that Arendt took in developing this clarity by rereading not only the earthliness of natality, but the *unearthliness* of totalitarianism will be pivotal in developing an ontology of earthly being under the aegis of the climate crisis, a singularly new unearthly phenomenon.

Leading Arendt towards the necessity to think the placedness of natality in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was her initial inquiry into those conditions that preceded totalitarianism. Forming part of the book's 'unusual' methodology, one that emerged out of her urge not to 'conserve totalitarianism but to destroy it,' the book began by confronting those 'elements which crystallised into' it.[95] Part of Arendt's motivation in making this decision was her conviction that while the phenomenon of totalitarianism under Nazi and Stalinist rule was over, the conditions for its return remain. Indeed, as Serena Parekh notes, it is the diffused nature of these underlying conditions that warrants an ongoing consideration of both totalitarianism and the (earthly) rights that it denied.[96] Chief amongst these conditions is the phenomenon of loneliness, which Arendt described as 'the

[93] Vatter, 2006: 157.
[94] LMT: 19.
[95] EU: 402; 403.
[96] Parekh, 2004: 41.

essence of totalitarianism.'[97] Distinct to feelings of isolation in which contact with the world remains and which is at times incumbent to the productive work of the *homo faber*, loneliness is closely connected with uprootedness and superfluousness. In this disconnection from place, both in the literal sense of homeland and the political or social sense of the *polis,* loneliness becomes parasitic to the human condition of relationality inscribed by natality and plurality. Invoking the earthliness of experience, Arendt describes the way in which once a person 'left their homeland they remained homeless, once they had left their state they became stateless; once they had been deprived of their human rights they were rightless, the scum of the earth.'[98] Robbed of a space of appearance in which to disclose oneself, loneliness erodes a sense of belonging to the world. What thus makes loneliness 'so unbearable is the loss of one's own self which can be realized in solitude but confirmed in its identity only by the trusting and trustworthy company of my equals.'[99] As a precursor to totalitarianism, loneliness foreshadows the crime the ideology will pose to the condition of ontological plurality. Where loneliness diminishes the relationality of being, totalitarianism all but obliterates it. Further refining this concern, the years between *The Origins* and *The Human Condition* saw Arendt clarify not only the centrality of natality to political thought but rectify the misplaced emphasis placed on the philosophical conception of 'Man' in contrast to the ontological plural 'men.'[100]

Building on precisely this categorical confusion, the dehumanisation of the death camp transformed humans 'into specimens of the human animal 'man.''[101] In the context of totalitarianism this uniformity assumes a particularly sinister colouring as the status 'Man' becomes a site of exclusionary specificity. Vatter accounts for the years between the publication of *The Origins* and *The Human Condition* as preoccupied by precisely this distinction between 'men' and 'Man,' hence the development of a definition of plurality in dialogue with the irreducibility of the earth to mere

[97] OT: 624. On totalitarianism and loneliness, see Danoff, 2000; Gaffney, 2016; Schaap, 2020; Topolski, 2015: 51-56.
[98] OT: 349.
[99] OT: 626.
[100] PP: 93.
[101] OT: 596.

materiality.[102] Guiding her inquiry was the working hypothesis that 'the entire western tradition of political thought has ignored this distinction, attempting to think politics from the identity of all human beings qua specimens of the same species, rather than from their "original differentiation."'[103] Recalled to the two definitions that Arendt provides of plurality in *The Human Condition,* the popular understanding of plurality as the common unrepeatability of each individual and the more 'earthly' account of plurality as drawn from the fact that men inhabit the earth, the full force of Vatter's claim can be felt. That Arendt's writing on plurality reaches a point of particular clarity in her final work where it is cast as *the* law of the earth is further evidence still of the way in which she comes to an understanding of earthly dwelling as central to the human status.

The ontological crime of totalitarianism, which attained to a violent extremity in the context of the death camp is thus twofold. First, the assault on the singularity of humans and the givenness of human difference. Implicit here is the denigration of human natality as a faculty for beginning. Arendt touches on this an entry dated April 1951 in her *Denktagebuch* where she writes that 'totalitarian extermination of men as men is the extermination of their spontaneity.'[104] Indeed, the negation of natality under totalitarianism – and with it the eradication of human spontaneity and action's unpredictability – effectively provided Arendt with the conditions to be redeemed in combatting totalitarianism. In other words, her project was not merely one of eradicating the historical specificity of *this* totalitarian government but of showing that inherent to human freedom are the instincts and drives that are born of human natality.[105] That Arendt placed the responsibility of the death camps 'squarely at the feet of a philosophically invalid and politically impotent notion of human rights,' meant that her redemption of natality would also become the groundwork of her renewed account of human rights.[106] She thus concludes *The Origins of Totalitarianism* with precisely such an evocation of natality, noting that it is this principle of beginning that might restore faith in humanity.[107] The first crime against plurality committed by totalitarianism was thus its complete denigration of the other

[102] HC: 8.
[103] Vatter, 2006: 141.
[104] Arendt, 2002: 66.
[105] EU: 304.
[106] Birmingham, 2006: 764.
[107] OT: 629.

half of plurality, natality. Robbed of the faculty to begin, totalitarianism extinguished meaning from the fact of appearance, which could no longer rely on the spontaneous disclosure of new and different individuals but had become a locus of mute homogeneity.

Coeval with the negation of human beginning was the utter abolition of human plurality, not simply as a fact of ontological difference, but as a quality of earthly existence as such. Once again Arendt's words from the *The Life of the Mind* resound here: 'plurality is the law of the earth.'[108] The earth *is* the locale of natality and plurality and hence of the conditions of the political. This question of the earth not simply as a shared entity but as a common ontological condition underpinned Arendt's pursuit of a new law of human dignity outlined in the preface to *The Origins*. Against the totalitarian perversion of this law, which sought to create a singular conception of 'the human,' namely, the inversion of the law that affirms that it is men and not Man who inhabit the earth is the law of difference inscribed in earthly plurality. Here again the intersection of natality and plurality is central to the crime committed by totalitarianism. If the first crime was the erosion of natality and the spontaneous beginnings that constitute the fabric of plurality, the second was perpetrated against the integrity of plurality as the earthly locus that would give meaning to natality. The intersection of natality and plurality become like two sides of the same coin in the context of totalitarianism. Hence, the account of natality as that which 'stands in the way of achieving, of finalizing the human species because, according to Arendt, natality only brings forth singulars, radically diverse individuals, but no species "Man."'[109]

The expulsion of certain humans from the abstract and ideological definition of 'Man,' while a singularly violent extreme within totalitarianism spaces persists insidiously throughout liberal democracy. Perhaps most consistently in the normativity of the masculine subject 'he' who populates philosophical and political writing, but latent in the presumed whiteness, heterosexuality, cis-gendered identity of the Western political subject. The self-referentiality to which the constructed, and yet ultimately abstract, iteration 'the human' or the 'Man' that ideology yields, while foreshadowing the discussion of the Kantian subject in Chapter 3 ultimately betrays its own limitations. Refusing to

[108] LMT: 19.
[109] Vatter, 2006: 153.

acknowledge the placedness of natality and that each individual is born such that they might begin-in-place, performing action in a way that brings into being a new understanding of what it is to dwell-in-place in earth-world-history, coincides with Arendt's depiction of a life that is literally dead to the world. While this account of natality in terms of its placedness is yet to answer the question of what it means to be born-in-place, the way in which the qualification of earthly life becomes a way of limiting the claim to natality's realisation points to an answer. Namely, that where the negation of human spontaneity challenges something specific about what it means to live in the world, so too does it undermine what it means to be-in-place on earth-world-history. Unpacking this in more detail in Part II where the meaning of natality's connection to place becomes the basis to think the fore-right to be-in-place, I want to conclude this chapter by reiterating the centrality of the earth to Arendt's political writings and recall her insistence on the placedness of natality and hence the necessary placedness of political action.

Part II

Natality: The Central Category of Earthly Politics

Chapter Three: On being born-in-place – the Condition of Natality

The central project of Part I was to bring into relief the constellation earth-world-history. Drawn in part from Walter Benjamin's conception of constellations as a methodological tool, I developed an understanding of earth-world-history as it can be shown to exist within Martin Heidegger and Hannah Arendt's engagement with the spatial and temporal conditions of human experience.[1] Throughout these two chapters, earth-world-history functioned as a methodological tool to explore the co-becoming of time and place, in Part II I move to think this constellation in the context of action, developing it as a conceptual tool in which to ground Arendt's political condition of human natality. Recalling the original distinction outlined in the Introduction between the *condition* of natality and the *faculty* of natality, the two chapters of Part II respectively explore the way natality is conditioned by its appearance within earth-world-history and, in turn, works to renew this conditioning constellation.

The co-presence of earth-world-history and natality was made apparent in Chapter Two, which closed with a discussion of natality's appearance in place. Central to this claim was a return to the second political condition on which natality is contingent: human plurality. Defining the latter as 'the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world,' in Chapter Two I sought to demonstrate the inextricability of natality and plurality from considerations of the earth.[2] When Arendt similarly describes natality in terms of placedness as 'the fact that human beings are *born* into the world,' the force of this prior grounding of world in the earth exposes the latent earthliness of natality.[3] The explicit connection to place complicates her framing of natality as the 'central category of political thought,' for not only is natality now understood as coeval with political appearance but with the agonism of earth-world-history itself.[4] And so, while Arendt emphasises the event of birth for natality, it is her qualification of this event as occurring in place, namely as taking place *into* the world, and hence inhering that constellation of earth-world-history that orientates this chapter.

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[1] AP*:* 10. On the function of constellations in Benjamin, see: Krauß; 2011; McFarland: 2012; Ross, 2020.
[2] HC: 7.
[3] HC: 9.
[4] Ibid.

Complicating this moment of intersection between earth-world-history and natality is Arendt's claim in *The Human Condition* that humans are 'conditioned beings,' and that while they contribute to this conditioning through acts that I understand in terms of Heideggerian dwelling or Arendtian action, their arrival into the world is conditioned.[5] Accepting these two premises, that humans are born into place and that that place exerts a claim over the human condition, to be born into earth-world-history is to be conditioned by earth-world-history. This connection becomes even more important in the second half of Part II where I turn to the messianic force of the *faculty* of natality. As the first half of this broader inquiry, this chapter follows the central question, what does it mean to be born-in-place, while the next advances this question by asking what it means to be-in-place?

Taking up the question of placedness and what it means to be born within the constellation earth-world-history inaugurates a further set of questions regarding the status of action as a placed event. Indeed, the force of the question, 'what does it mean to be born-in-place' and its attendant concerns become increasingly pressing in the context of the climate crisis where the integrity of place and the realisation of placedness are made increasingly perilous.[6] While this threat to place is the central concern of Part III where I explore the exilic condition of the climate crisis, it is in developing an understanding of what it means to be born-in-place that a response to this exilic condition can be discerned. Basing my answer to this question on the acknowledgement that *all* humans are born-in-place and thus that placedness is a common condition to the being of being human, in this chapter I turn to an analogous inquiry into the latent yet unexplored conditions of human birth. Following Adriana Cavarero's parallel investigation into birth, which begins by reconfiguring the status of the maternal figure before developing an original set of ethical principles, I aim to uncover a similar

[5] HC: 9. This exploration between dwelling and anthropogenic conditioning will be central to Chapter Four.
[6] While clear threats to place exist in the context of extreme weather events, rising sea levels and ongoing droughts, as I turn to explore the precarity of place under the exilic condition it is equally the refusal to admit unqualified entry of all people to the 'storybook of mankind' that informs my understanding of threats to place. In other words, it is the refusal to tell an impartial history (and future) of the climate crisis and to thereby bring into question the legitimacy of each individual's claim to be narratable and be able to narrate history that is my organising concern.

ethical framework in relation to natality's condition of placedness.[7] This chapter thus turns in equal parts to Cavarero's critical retelling of Arendt's writing towards a feminist project of relational ethics and to Arendt's own writing on the intersection of place and rights. Beginning in section 3.1 with an overview of the Kantian tradition from which Cavarero establishes herself at critical distance, I turn in section 3.2 to discuss the specifics of postural ethics as they emerge from a reframing of the maternal figure in considerations of natality. In the closing section, I explore the connections between natality's condition of placedness and Arendt's largely ungrounded conception of the 'right to have rights.'[8] Arguing that the placedness of natality provides an ontological basis on which to locate this framework for rights, this section anticipates the negation of rights to placedness in the exilic condition of Part III.

3.1 Natality: the fact that we are born of a (m)other

The methodological paradigm that Cavarero sets up sets up a precedent for my own methodological inquiry into natality. For Cavarero it is the recovery of the maternal figure at the scene of natality, effective not only in reorienting questions of gender and gendering, that ultimately gives rise to a specific ethical construct, one that Cavarero calls a 'postural ethics.' In turn, I rely on a similar recovery of the earth in order to develop my own ethical framework for the 'right-to-placedness.' Refusing to read natality as an instance of metaphorical abstraction in Arendt's writing, a mode of reading that implicitly disavows the role of the maternal as anything other than symbolic, Cavarero sees within the event of natality the groundwork by which to rethink not simply questions of ethical relationality but the very position of natality as a political category. In turn, my own redemption of the role place and earth-world-history play in the formation of natality brings into sharp relief the ethical

[7] Cavarero's feminist interpretations of Arendt's work extend beyond investigations into the conditions and maternal origins of natality. See Cavarero and Bertolino, 2008 for an overview of the way in which Cavarero reworks Arendt's political theory.

[8] Arendt introduces the notion of the 'right to have rights' in *The Origins of Totalitarianism.* Though the logic of the claim, namely, that human rights cannot be defined exclusively in relation to the nation state but need an organising framework, carries a lot of force and exposes the fallibility of human rights, the actual construction is largely underdeveloped by Arendt. On attempts to ground the right to have rights see; Benhabib, 2002; Birmingham, 2007; Hamacher, 2014; Ingram, 2008.

consequences that arise from the positioning of this inherently placed condition as central to conceptions of political action.

As one of the most prominent contemporary Arendt scholars, Cavarero's project not only serves to enrich discussions, my own included, around the theme of natality, it informs the tone and direction of my project. Aimed less at exegetical inquiry, whether that's in regard to the maternal for Cavarero or the earth for myself, Cavarero uncovers the depth of Arendt's writing, allowing her themes to become 'stepping-stones for the articulation of her own, unique feminist project.'[9] While her opening salvo, to rethink the maternal may appear initially simplistic, the new ethical ground that she establishes through her account of what she calls 'postural ethics' informs the parallel extension of natality into the realm of earthly or 'placed' ethics.[10] What Cavarero thus achieves by thinking natality in terms of its (m)otherly origins transcends the specific frame of her own discussion and becomes meaningful in its application to questions like the climate crisis and the responsibility to care.[11] Beyond a straightforward reconsideration of the natal event in terms of the maternal rather than the infant, Cavarero's work equally functions as an explicit critique of the Western emblem of moral rectitude, embodied, for her, in the Kantian figure of rectitude. Locating this figure within an antiquated ethical paradigm, the maternal rereading of natality thus works to 'critique its limits, pretences and uncritical adoption in the fields of ontology, ethics and politics.'[12]

The presence of the mother in Arendt's introduction of natality is noted only in passing. Where Arendt explicitly lauds the arrival of the miraculous child, her reference to the maternal is subtle, invoked in the claim that life born in a test tube would mark 'an escape from the human condition.'[13] While the disruptive child thus lays claim to a place of primacy in Arendt's politics of the new and the condition of natality, allusions to the maternal figure are seen, nevertheless, to persist. Recovering the meaning of the maternal, Cavarero simultaneously works at a distance from Arendt, pursuing a line of

[9] Honkasalo, 2016: 77.
[10] ICR.
[11] I want to qualify Cavarero's preoccupation with the maternal or motherly origins of birth with the subtle transition to think the parental or carer figure in the anti-essential terms of the '(m)otherly.' I retain this notion throught this project as a reflect on the necessary plurality of natality, recognising the specificity of the maternal whilst also incorporating a more expansive understanding of who is recognised in this role.
[12] ICR: 128.
[13] HC: 2.

inquiry that Arendt did not, whilst also paying careful attention to the latent maternal references in her work. Indeed, that Arendt maintains the event of birth as central to her political ontology, not simply in its metaphorical abstraction as 'the second birth' but as the literal moment of birth serves as a pivotal point of departure for Cavarero. [14] Reducing her neither to a metaphorical basis nor to her purely instrumental role as the progenitor of life, Cavarero frames the figure of the mother as herself a conditioning factor to the condition of natality. Given Arendt's insistence that natality is the ontological basis for political action more broadly, what Cavarero's project thus suggests is something, if not maternal in and of itself, to the status of politics but at the very least something in political action that cannot be separated from its maternal origin.[15]

Although clearly indebted to Arendt's work, Cavarero makes clear that she is not naively accepting of her writings. A critical student, then, Cavarero's readings of Arendt are distinct in the provocation they make of some of Arendt's seemingly least provocative claims. Developed in part as critical exegesis, the motif of Cavarero's use of Arendt's work as 'stepping-stones' towards a more radical, concrete and emancipatory politics, is clear. [16] Rather than simply accept, for instance, Arendt's politics of speech, in *For More than One Voice,* Cavarero develops an embodied politics of the voice, advancing a new politics of speech that calls attention to, what now reads, as Arendt's abstract and disembodied rendering of Aristotelian speech.[17] Assuming a more declarative stance still, Cavarero's rereading of natality in *Inclinations: A Critique of Rectitude* progresses a sustained critique of Arendt's neglect of the maternal figure. Moreover, the recovery of the maternal figure not only challenges the limits of natality but, insofar as she qualifies the original appearance of that plurality into which the natal subject arrives, she calls for renewed attention to the status and conditions intrinsic to the political construct of plurality. What thus runs throughout her interpretation of Arendtian themes is the persistent attempt to make fleshy those bodies that otherwise appear troublesomely abstract in Arendt's thinking. Cavarero's insistence on concretising, grounding, and

[14] HC: 176.
[15] HC: 247.
[16] Honkasalo, 2016: 77.
[17] Cavarero, 2005.

ultimately problematising Arendt's writing allows the depth of what can otherwise persist as unexplored ideas to emerge.

Beyond the absence of the mother and the labour of childbirth, Cavarero calls attention to Arendt's failure to consider the dependence of the infant. Stopping short of incorporating a discussion of either this or the mother's exposed vulnerability in acts of care, Cavarero exposes the richness of underexplored terrain that make up 'natality.' Yet rather than abandon Arendt's conclusions on the plurality and spontaneity of action that stem from the miraculous originality of this moment, Cavarero puts the recovery of the maternal figure and states of dependence to service in their ongoing development. It is precisely for this reason that I want to think in terms of a maternal 'redemption;' namely, the figure of the mother is always already present in Arendt's use of natality, such that redeeming her position brings into force the fullness of the event's ontological meaning. Before she even arrives at the geometrical plane of postural ethics then, Cavarero's redemption of the maternal has managed to reinvigorate the relationality of Arendt's account of politics, giving new life to the way in which reciprocity informs the meaning of political action. Fleshing out the lived conditions of childbirth, both in terms of embodied vulnerability and corporeal dependence, Cavarero clarifies the distinction that Arendt makes between childbirth as archetypal of political action and the more abstract 'second birth' which affirms the irreducibility of the self as natal beginner. Indeed, it is Arendt's insistence that there be both a political ontology of literal birth and this second birth, that Cavarero brings to light in her move to explore the conditions of childbirth. If action were merely the product of the second birth, a metaphorical allusion to childbirth would be sufficient. But Arendt does not do that. She stresses that there is something specific to childbirth which serves not as the metaphorical basis of action, buts as its ontological foundation. This leads Fanny Söderbäck to conclude that the organising question behind Cavarero's project, and which I requalify here in terms of otherness is 'what does it *mean* to be born' [of a (m)other]?'[18]

[18] Söderbäck, 2018: 276, emphasis added. Jeffrey Champlin asks a similar question: 'what kind of fact is the fact of birth?' Champlin's inclination towards an episteme of birth, however, fails to attain the same degree of ontological inquiry as Söderbäck's, 2013.

Although Arendt is emphatic about the centrality of natality to politics, as noted, she describes it as 'the central category of political thought,' in response to Söderbäck's question, readers of Arendt are left wanting.[19] If we are then to remain faithful to Arendt's insistence, albeit one developed in oblique terms, that there is something intrinsic to childbirth that conditions natality, without slipping into metaphorization, an exacting account of birth must be undertaken. Cavarero assumes this task with a keen and critical eye, going beyond an exegetical reading of natality to develop an account of natality that sheds new light on Arendt's concerns with plurality and the anti-sovereign dimension of freedom. The simplicity with which Cavarero calls attention to the neglected maternal figure in Arendtian natality – and considerations of birth more generally across the canon of Western thought – thus serves as a point of departure from which to develop a far more sustained and intricate web of human relations. Central to this development is the projection of relationality inscribed at birth onto a geometrical plane, where a schematic for 'postural ethics' might be discerned. Coordinated around the imagined inclination of the mother over her child and the infant's repose or dependence upon the mother, postural ethics serve as a provocation to a history of moral rectitude and autarchic sovereignty, modes of being that Cavarero locates first and foremost in the Kantian ego. And so, whilst developed following a matrix of female labour and the specificity of a maternal experience, Cavarero's redemption of the maternal extends beyond the female experience: it becomes a point of entry into a discussion of ethical relationality more generally.

Cavarero begins her discussion of natality by returning to *The Human Condition.* Although the text represents only one instance in which Arendt invokes the human capacity to begin, it is here that she names the condition of natality as central to political action for the first time. While the book can thus appear as providing the definitive account of natality, Cavarero moves slowly through the work, seeking clarity in Arendt's rushed description of natality in connection to the birth of Jesus. While the birth of Jesus assumes a central position as one of *the* disruptive moments of Western history, one to which Arendt returns throughout her work, when it appears in *The Human Condition* it is the subject of a misattribution. Though Cavarero concedes that Arendt frequently cited from memory, an attitude

[19] HC: 9.

that rendered misattributions something of a commonplace in her writing, her misattribution regarding the birth of Jesus, so Cavarero argues, warrants examination. Deployed in order to emphasise the anthropogenic miracle of birth, Arendt's turn to the Gospels is intended to serve as evidence of the limits of political thought that has far passed over the political implications of the natal moment.[20] At the close of the chapter on 'Action,' she writes:

> [The miracle] is, in other words, the birth of new men and the new beginning, the action they are capable of by virtue of being born. Only the full experience of this capacity can bestow upon human affairs faith and hope, those two essential characteristics of human existence which Greek antiquity ignored altogether… It is this faith in and hope for the world that found perhaps its most glorious and most succinct expression in the few words with which the Gospels announced their "glad tidings": "A child has been born unto us."[21]

While one of her clear intentions is to break the link between a discourse of birth and the language of theology, her broader project is sketched in relation to the status of 'human affairs.' The clarity to which natality attains in Arendt's writing after the war can thus be read as part of her attempt to reconcile the 'human affairs' of the 20th century, first and foremost that of European totalitarianism, without succumbing to a form of existential nihilism. Beyond its application in the immediate context post-war era, however, natality signals Arendt's reorientation of the human condition more generally; from one that culminates in mortality to one that centres on the event of beginning.

Despite the force of this inversion Cavarero resists moving forward with Arendt's misattributed reference to the Gospels. Aware that Arendt 'often cited from memory, with rather imprecise results,' in this instance Cavarero argues that her infidelity 'assume a meaning that is far from banal.'[22] Much of the meaning Cavarero attributes to this moment hinges on the way the child is depicted as entering a community. Cavarero clarifies this point by noting that 'every newborn, each

[20] LSA: 6.
[21] HC: 246-7.
[22] ICR: 108

human being who makes its entrance into the world – is not born *to us* coming from *elsewhere,* but instead, according to the Arendtian vision, appears *among* us *here.*'[23] Implicit in this claim is the locative and relational immediacy of natality. Namely, that this is precisely not the appearance of an infant from without, who comes from elsewhere, arriving as an autarchic and singular self, but an integrally relational and placed appearance. A clear contrast to the grounded account of natality can be seen in Peg Birmingham's remark that natality is 'the originary event [which] proceeds from nothingness.'[24] Contesting Birmingham's description, Cavarero firmly locates natality within the context of a plurality. In other words, natality and plurality are not simply conditions that coincide in the act of appearance, they are irreducibly linked in a common ontology. Much like the co-becoming of earth-world-history that I described in Part I, natality and plurality are bound in a similarly co-constitutive union. Establishing greater distance still from accounts of natality like Birmingham's, Cavarero describes 'relation itself as originary and constitutive, as an essential dimension of the human, which – far from limiting itself to putting free and autonomous individuals in relation to each other, as the doctrine of social practice prescribes – calls into question our being creatures who are materially vulnerable and, often in greatly unbalanced circumstances, consigned to one another.'[25]

As an 'original dimension of the human,' there is thus a particular accuracy in thinking natality in terms of a *disclosure*; disclosed as such through a set of existing relations. Cavarero reminds us that in Arendt's lexicon, 'appearance' is not a generic term but, 'insofar as appearing coincides for Arendt with being in the world and being of the world,' one with technical connotations.[26] Appearing coincides with the disclosure of the world and its actors, such that natality transforms the 'web of human relations which exists wherever men live together.'[27] While Cavarero's commitment to a project of feminist ethics and a politics of care and dependence will have her coordinate her response to Arendt's misattributed citation in relation to the 'us' of '*among* us *here,'* as a plural and intersectional space of inter-subjectivity, a space in which relations of dependence

[23] Ibid.
[24] Birmingham, 2007: 31.
[25] Cavarero, 2016: 13.
[26] Cavarero, 2014: 18.
[27] HC: 184.

assume a definitive force, Arendt's ongoing attention to the placedness of natality, the 'here' in which natality appears hints at a second locative concern. Indeed, it is within this 'here,' one that I argue is located within the constellation of earth-world-history that the placedness of natality and its appearance 'in place' is determined. Rather than pursue this line, it is the prior plurality, the 'us,' to which Cavarero attends. Refusing a narrative of pure immanence, in which the child appears as an abstract rupture, both in the sense of *who* and *where* they interrupt, Cavarero grounds this moment in the matrix of social relations that is Arendt's 'web of reality.' In other words, it is plurality – which should be recalled as the 'law of the earth' – out of which the child appears.[28]

Remaining in proximity to the lived conditions of birth, Cavarero advances her argument in relation to the vulnerability and utter dependence of the infant, highlighting the conditions of dependence that coordinate the original appearance of natality. As she writes, 'the scene of birth presents us, inevitably, with the absolute exposure of the child, the newborn, the one who announces the human condition as substantially vulnerable.'[29] What thus appears first and foremost as a pedantic clarification of one of the many misattributions in Arendt's writing allows her to foreground the way in which vulnerability is co-present with natality, inviting a conception of political action (the realisation of natality) that is simultaneously a realisation of vulnerability. Indeed, excising the condition that are co-present in natality – itself the ontological condition for political action – enables her to position natality as the affirmation of plurality's uneven and interdependent formation.[30] These unbalanced exposures play on the trope of asymmetry, recalling the dependence of the child on the parental figure as central to the original moment of natality. What is thus manifest in Cavarero's turn to natality is the 'desire to prompt a different cultural formation' in which asymmetry might assume a productive and normative status in accounts of political commonality.[31] Anticipating the way in which I will read the placedness of natality explored in Chapter 2.3 in the final section of this chapter, it is clear that once the conditions inherent to the condition of political action are exposed, the realisation

[28] LMT: 19.
[29] Cavarero, 2011: 196.
[30] Cavarero, 2011: 196.
[31] Martin, 2002: 34.

of action assumes new meaning. In the case of natality's placedness this meaning will pertain to the preservation of place co-present in political appearance.

Beyond her vulnerability to the material conditions of birth and her exposure in the act of labour, Cavarero goes on to stress the enduring bond between parent and child throughout infancy. Completely dependent on the care of others, the child signifies the original precarity of community on the disposition, or inclination, of others to heed their call. The 'peculiarity' of Arendt's 'space of appearance' that it 'comes into being wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action' but disappears with their dispersal or the arrest of their activities thus finds an archetypal origin in the tenuous union between mother and child.[32] What might appear as a metaphorization of natality here is in fact the affirmation of the conditions for political community that are formed at the moment of birth, chief amongst them an asymmetrical relationality. Without equating motherhood with care, Cavarero repositions care as the brick and mortar of ethics, distilling it from a realm of feminized labour to a broader ontology of political difference and ethical relationality.[33] Recreating certain tropes of Heideggerian ethics from *Being and Time* Cavarero gleans an ethics from the originality of care.[34] Where Heidegger foregrounds the way in which 'the conditional and contingent character of human life must forever disrupt any effort to forge a doctrine of ethics, and consequently, any ethics that is sensitive to this conditionality will not be able to deny its own conditional nature – in other words, it must recognise its own questionableness,' Cavarero would have us privilege within the logic of ethics the undeniability of being born from another and dependent upon their care.[35] Holding onto a similar theme of 'questionableness' sits at the core of an engagement with natality both as the ontological ground of political action and itself grounded by the broader constellation of earth-world-history. Again, the inability to totalise the appearance of earth-world-history and locate within it *an* origin or something like *an* iteration of the fourfold can be felt in Cavarero's embrace of ontological instability.

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[32] HC: 199.
[33] On the ethics of feminine labour and care see, de la Bellacasa, 2012; 2017; Held, 2006; Tronto, 1993.
[34] This affinity between Heidegger's use of *Sorge* and Cavarero's use of care cannot be explored in greater detail here, however I raise this point to emphasize the variety of ways in which care has entered into a discourse of ethics.
[35] Schmidt, 2012: 39. On the connection between Heidegger and Cavarero see, Guenther, 2008.

The force of Cavarero's maternal reading appears in her critique of Kantian rectitude, an account of appearance that explicitly denies the asymmetrical dependence of mother and child. Indeed, it is her challenge to Kant that highlights the depth of her claims in relation to Arendt. She begins this section of her work with a reading of Kant's minor work, 'Conjectures on the Beginnings of Human History.' Citing directly from the text, she actually coordinates the principal salvo of her *Inclinations* book around the Kantian thesis that a conjecture on the beginning of history, while not based exclusively on historical records must, 'if we are not to indulge in wild conjectures…begin with something which human reason cannot deduce from prior natural causes – that is, with the existence of human beings.'[36] Rather than follow Kant with the qualification that this human being 'must also be fully developed [and] have no mother to support them,' as has become clear, Cavarero's conjectures on the human condition begin with the figure of the mother.[37] In fact, what emerges as the paradoxical condition of Kant's conjecture, that independence cannot be thought in proximity to the entity on which it was once dependent, is shown by Cavarero to undermine the viability of Kant's conclusions. While Kant seemingly acknowledges the mother as a figure of dependence, for it is she who must be denied if conjectures on human independence are to proceed, at this stage her presence is ultimately inconsequential.

This original negation takes a troubling turn for Cavarero when the mother is shown by Kant to become an active hindrance to the fulfilment of independence. Kant continues: 'the first human being could therefore *stand* and *walk*; he could *speak* (cf. Genesis 11.20) and indeed *talk.*'[38] The mother thus exists as irrelevant to the appearance of the child and their ongoing development, even in the context of those skills typically deemed the hallmark of sociability and relationality. Emancipated from the caring disposition of others, the Kantian self is free to explore his divinely entrusted skills of speech, not, to be sure to develop a conversation based on difference or the specificity of individual experience – each subject at the beginning of Kant's historical conjecture can rightly assume to have sprung from the same box of providence – but seemingly to discuss the ethics born of innate and

[36] Kant, 1970: 222.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.

unreflective privilege. While this prospective conversation may indeed provide the ground for a partial rebuttal to the ontological autarchy of the Kantian self, insofar as Kant does not completely discount the presence of the other, this is not actually Cavarero's concern. Here, we see the specific need to think in terms of the natal condition, or *the conditions for that condition*, become more apparent.

The problem for Cavarero is that Kant develops an account of sociability only after he has outlined a condition of selfhood developed in exclusively self-referential terms, a delay that omits any possibility of a relational ontology. Indeed, where Arendt locates the capacity of speech as performable only within the context of a plurality where others might attest to it and give it meaning, Kant claims that speech is a trait already acquired *ex nihilio.* The contrast between Kant and Arendt, as Cavarero sees it, is stark. For Arendt speech, together with action, constitutes 'the fabric of human relationships and affairs. They become "worldly things" insofar as they are 'seen, heard, and remembered.'[39] In contrast, Kant's account of speech, while located in the context of a multiplicity, is shown by Cavarero to be the product of an already existing self-determined reality. Cavarero will further this argument and link Arendt's worldly speech with the corporeality of experience, thereby 'putting flesh on the bones' of Arendt's argument, and linking speech to the guttural realm of the voice.[40] Developing a philosophy of the voice, she describes the way in which 'the voice, whatever it says, communicates the uniqueness of the one who emits it, and can be recognised by those to whom it speaks.'[41] The divergence between Arendt and Kant becomes all the more apparent in relation to the latter's unqualified account of speech:

> These are all skills [speaking, walking, talking] which he had to acquire for himself…I assume, however, that he is already in possession of them, for I wish merely to consider the development of human behaviour from the ethical point of view, and this necessarily presupposes that the skills in question are already present.[42]

[39] HC: 95.
[40] Guenther uses this image to describe the way in which Cavarero emphasises the embodied dimension of Arendt's largely disembodied account of natality, 2008: 109.
[41] Cavarero, 2005: 24.
[42] Cavarero, 2005: 222-3

What underpins Kant's claim here is the implicit assumption that methods of learning and, prior to that, states of ignorance and hence forms of epistemic vulnerability,y are not ethical concerns, certainly not the groundwork for an ethical doctrine.[43] Kant's evasion of an ethics of vulnerability proffers the dangerous conclusion that the question of ethics is without application when posed in consideration of those individuals lacking in the behaviours of speaking, walking, and talking.

Cavarero's insistence on exposing these underlying assumptions in Kant's account of the subject not only exposes the limitations of the methodological framing of his own ethical conjectures – namely, that if they presume the status of skilled independence as already given, upon what, if any basis can they consider questions of inequality or injustice– it problematises the very foundation from which Kant assumes his conjectures to begin. Not only does Cavarero progress a well-established politicisation of the private in the pursuit of a feminist ethics then, she also exposes the always already political ground of an event so frequently denied entry into conceptions of political ontology. Once again then we are reminded of the way in which Cavarero is not simply drawing out a metaphorical extrapolation of natality but invested in highlighting what was already political about birth.

Beyond the relative ease with which Kant refuses the mother ethical consideration, as either an ethical subject or as a figure whose presence conditions the very status of ethics, he reveals a far more extensive disapproval of relationships either founded or premised upon states of mutual dependence. For Kant, the figure of the self should stand erect, upright and without the interference of others, hence Cavarero's critique of the verticality of the Kantian 'I.' The bond between mother and child worries Kant because insofar as the child depends upon another, its own independence is delayed. Indeed, Kant's definition of enlightenment as 'the human being's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity' in infancy reveals an understanding of maturity as premised on overcoming the maternal bond.[44] In the context of education, Kant misconstrues maternal stimulation of speech as baseless affection: 'when the child tries to speak the mangling of words is so charming the mother and nurse that this inclines them to hug and kiss him.'[45] While the omission of a gender plurality here

[43] On the ethical implications of epistemic injustice see, Fricker, 2007.
[44] Guenther incorporates a similar etymological reading of infancy, *in-fans* or without voice, to supplant the original relationality of birth and childhood, 2008: 2.
[45] Kant, 2006: 16.

might lead us to conclude that the female child pronounces her words clearly, it is perhaps more likely that Kant is unconcerned with the development of girls. Yet it is the position of the mother, depicted her as inclined over her child that allows Cavarero to move past the original maternal condition of natality to develop an ethical paradigm. While for Kant the inclined body presents both a literal obstacle and moral perversion of the child's pursuit of reason and morality, for Cavarero it provides a geometrical image of the asymmetrical relations that organise a political plurality.

The force of Kant's rejection of inclination gestures towards the ethical depth that Cavarero will go on to locate in her recovery of inclined or postural ethics. Hence, when Kant describes inclination over the child as 'retarding the process that will free the self from dependence and culminate in the figure of the autonomous self – the self, that is to say, who will function as his own moral legislator, and who, once he assumes a typically erect posture, will be balanced on the internal axis of his own "authentic self,"' a contrasting image can be seen to form in Cavarero's mind.[46] And so, before she even develops the geometrical plane upon which a postural ethics will operate, Kant has already provided an imaginary opposition: the political as an aggregate of self-referential subjects, free from the obstacle of inclined mothers and careers who seek to obstruct their development. Unlike Arendtian plurality, where selfhood coincides with irreducible difference, there is nothing to distinguish the vertical 'I's of Kant's multiplicity. Indeed, it is precisely a multiplicity – the multiplied projection of identical I's, morally erect subjects who while they might depend on no one also fail to sustain meaningful relations with them – that provides an undeniable binary to the depth of Arendt's relational plurality.

Cavarero goes further in her pursuit of an originally relational plurality by contrasting the depiction of Adam in Arendt and Kant's writing. Deprived of an infantile state of dependence, As the basis for an account human ontology Adam would seem to inspire little other than a world of vertical Kantian subjects. Indeed, in words that evoke the original independence of the Kantian self, Cavarero cites John Locke's description of Adam as emerging with 'body and mind in full possession of their strength and reason.'[47] Anticipating Cavarero's suspicion of Adam's self-sufficiency, Arendt rejected

[46] ICR: 27.
[47] Locke, 1998: 305

the Adamic origin of humans precisely on the ground of preserving the political integrity of plurality. Miguel Vatter goes into even greater detail on Arendt' resistance to Adam:

> For if such a progenitor becomes the model for political association, then this association will never be one that begins from the plurality of men. That is why Arendt has no hesitation in praising Hobbes, and modern contractarian theory in general, for rejecting the Adamic origin of men and replacing it by the state of nature, thus preparing the way for thinking about the political from the originary plurality of individuals who form the in-between by way of compacts.[48]

Kant, however, insistent upon a model of autarchic singularity, goes as far as to gesture to Adam's fig-leaf as evidence of original moral uprightness and control over the inclination of sexual desire. Distancing himself from the 'satisfaction of a purely animal desire,' Kant views Adam's sartorial intervention as evidence of reason and the move away from desire 'to love, and so also from a feeling for the merely agreeable to a taste for beauty.'[49]

Yet, what is lost in the rendering of inclined desire into aesthetic consideration is the vulnerability of love itself. In Kant's account love loses its dangerous edge, reducing the other to a form of aesthetic immanence, here the loveable subject is no longer met an at angle of inclined exposure but viewed as a complete and self-sufficient whole.[50] Challenging this view, when Cavarero develops her account of love, it is precisely in reference to those qualities co-present in natality – vulnerability, dependence, and exposure – that sustain it. Love is thus defined less in terms of aesthetic distinction, but as the affirmation of individual irreducibility, in other words, as the impossibility of understanding the other as aesthetically distinguishable. Like the instability and

[48] Vatter, 2006: 148.
[49] ICR: 224.
[50] Although Arendt's views on love are mixed, described in *The Human Condition* as an anti-political experience, in her final work *The Life of the Mind,* she develops an account of love that returns to her doctoral work on Saint Augustine. Here she follows Augustine that love is the affirmation of the self, *amo: volo ut sis,* I love you: I will that you be. On the diverging accounts of love in Arendt's writing see, Chiba, 1995; Tamboukou, 2013; Tatman, 2013.

irreducible origin of earth-world-history, love functions as the affirmation of natality's intrinsic otherness. Recovering a language of maternal inclination so dismissed by Kant, Cavarero thus describes two lovers, as following a path of inclination, who 'want to embrace the full splendour of the finite according to the reciprocal uniqueness that exposes and distinguishes them in the *with.* Loving each other, they are simply reborn to the inaugural and relational fragility of their existence.'[51] Love thus becomes a way to reinvigorate what was so intrinsic to the condition of natality. This point will be central to the realisation of natality in overcoming the exilic condition in Chapter Six.

Remaining in the proximity of love, the distance between Cavarero and Kant on the ethical force of inclination is put into greater clarity still. In the context of sexual desire, Kant cautions that inclination can erode the very viability of happiness. Belabouring the importance of rectitude, he writes in the *Critique of Practical Reason,* that 'an upright man cannot be happy if he is not first conscious of his uprightness.'[52] States of inclination, which Cavarero would remind us are present both in the inclination of the carer over the vulnerable and the vulnerable toward the carer and thus irreducible to questions of power, become for Kant an obstacle to the very fulfilment of happiness. Pushing further at this point a line can be drawn to Kant's propositions regarding the historical development of man in 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose.' Told through the image of a forest, Kant creates an ominous image of trees who, 'by seeking to deprive each other of air and sunlight, compel each other to find these by upward growth, so that they grow beautiful and straight – whereas those which put out branches at will, in freedom and in isolation from others, grow stunted, bent and twisted.'[53] Kant sees the pursuit of support, of trees that 'put out branches at will,' inclined towards their peers in the attempt, perhaps, to overcome isolation, as an aesthetic perversion of the natural order. In contrast, those trees that seek the privation of their peers are compelled upwards, their abuses seemingly necessary in the pursuit of moral rectitude. If the spectre of Kant's trees is the basis of ethical uprightness, it is the gnarled and twisted trees that populate Cavarero's geometry of ethical inclination that celebrates the otherness of relational plurality.

[51] Cavarero, 1997: 21.
[52] Kant, 1996: 233.
[53] Kant, 1991: 46.

3.2 Natality as Postural Ethics

To be born from a (m)other has an ontological consequence. This is the claim on which Cavarero's recovery of the maternal rests. Where the centrality of the maternal figure has already been brought to the fore, clarified in the distance it establishes from the traditional Kantian depiction of verticality, here I want to unpack the implications of her presence. While for Kant the negation of the mother enabled him to develop a form of ethics that hinged on the centrality of the morally erect subject, for Cavarero the subject of ethics is distinguished by their inclined geometry. Establishing greater distance still then, Cavarero's embrace of (maternal) inclination opens up a paradigm in which to think the intersection of inclined bodies who turn themselves outward from the moment of birth in an ethical praxis of shared dependence. Cavarero advances her argument via a close reading of the painting that adorns the English language translation of her book, *Inclinations* (2016). Indeed, it is her analysis of Leonardo's oil painting *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* (1503-19) that forms the visual basis for her geometrical plane of ethical relationality.

Relying on the inclined postures of the painting's three figure, what is embedded within Cavarero's description is a reflection on the intergenerationality of natality.[54] This connection to the role of natality in linking generations will be central to later chapters on the force of natality not only to disrupt the movement of time but create lasting bonds between generations. She describes the painting:

> Mary is at the centre of the canvas, leaning forward, bent over her son, seated on the lap of her own mother, Anne. Anne, in turn, inclines her head slightly toward Mary, and also, following the axis of oblique gazes traversing the portrait, toward baby Jesus. Jesus, meanwhile, leans against his mother's leg, holding a lamb, a symbol of the passion and sacrifice that awaits him…Leaning over baby Jesus, as if to spare him from his fate, the

[54] For a close reading of the historical implications of Cavarero's 'inclined' reading of natality see Benjamin, 2020.

> Virgin Mary holds his hand and body with on ordinary gesture of maternal care. Unbalanced along her own axis, she noticeably inclines herself.[55]

Caught between two positions, the image of Mary as swaying between a past and future personified by mother and son invokes Arendt's depiction of past and future as intersecting axes which meet and rupture in the present. Cavarero's use of geometrical language is perhaps best anticipated by Arendt in the latter's reading of Kafka's parable 'HE.' Here the eponymous 'he' is depicted in a fight with 'two antagonists' who confront him from 'behind' and from 'ahead.'[56] In Arendt's account, the scene of the story is the 'battleground on which the forces of the past and the future clash with each other.'[57] And where Mary serves as the pivotal figure for Cavarero, as the one who captures the state of inclination that gives meaning to the arrival of the newborn, Arendt's concern is with 'he,' the one without whom the meeting of past and future would pass without consequence.

Holding onto the image of Mary's inclined body and the way in which it feeds into an ethics of inclination, I want to reread Arendt's historical geometry, supplementing her description of the gap between past and future as co-present with the realisation of natality's placedness. Returning to Kafka's story then, she writes:

> The antagonistic forces of past and future are both indefinite as to their origin; seen from the viewpoint of the present in the middle, the one comes from an infinite past and the other from an infinite future. But though they have no known beginning, they have a terminal ending, the point at which they meet and clash, which is the present. The diagonal force, on the contrary, has a definite origin, its starting-point being the clash of the two other forces, but it has resulted from the concerted action of two forces whose origin is infinity. This diagonal force, whose origin is known, whose direction is determined by past and future, but which exists in

[55] ICR: 97.
[56] BPF: 7.
[57] BPF: 10.

> its force toward an undetermined end as though it could reach out into infinity, seems to me a perfect metaphor for the activity of thought.[58]

If thinking serves as the metaphorical index for this collision, it is the condition of natality that determines its potential. Unlike Kant's conjectures on the beginning of history, Arendt's reliance on the notion of a 'definite' origin echoes the paradox of Heidegger's origin in the work of art: there can be no substantive origin without a simultaneous consideration of the conditions that make conceptions of the origin possible. Though 'definite' there is an intrinsic irreducibility at the origin. Hence, there can be no account of the 'origin' of natality without offering a simultaneous account of those conditions that give rise to it. Caught between past and future, Cavarero's image of Mary recalls the ineliminable connection of the present to those generations that precede and follow it.

Even as natality remains embedded in the plurality of historical generations, its appearance as a beginning is not diminished. Recognising the relational temporality of natality simply recalls what figured for Cavarero as the relational ontology of natality. Indeed, for Matthias Fritsch, the injunction to acknowledge the present as a beginning enjoins a singular responsibility, namely that 'we must see ourselves as only one generation among many others before and after us, while *also* seeing ourselves as unique in being singled out by a special responsibility.'[59] Returning to Cavarero then, the fact of this responsibility is shown to exist at birth. When she describes the infant's cry as 'an invoking life that unknowingly entrusts itself to a voice that responds,' to respond in the negative is not simply to absolve oneself of responsibility and care but to denigrate the original relationality that connects the unknowing infant to something other than themselves.[60] In other words, an ethics of response is inherent to the very ontology of natality, and this is true whether that natality is read within the context of an immediate plurality or distended through a historical plurality, across generations, and perhaps even space. James Baldwin similarly attests to the cry as indicative of the child 'having opted against solitude.'[61] Kant offers a seemingly inverted reading of the infant's cry, one that attests to this

[58] LMT: 209
[59] Fritsch, 2018: 158.
[60] Cavarero, 2005: 169.
[61] Baldwin, 1972: 6.

self-referential ontology and the convergence of verticality, moral uprightness, and freedom. In *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View,* he suggests that the child enters the world with loud cries, because at this inaugural moment they have recognised the profound injustice that is 'the inability to make use of its limbs as a *constraint,* and thus [in sobs] it immediately announces its claim to freedom.'[62] Again, that the child has an innate grasp on the notion of freedom is moderated through Kant's admission that he has, if not a developed sense of freedom, 'an obscure idea' of it. For Cavarero, Kant's prejudice against the newborn and insistence on 'the model of an autistic 'I' that legislates and obliges itself, a vertical and steady I,' undermines the capacity of politics to be informed by questions of otherness and responsibility.[63]

Structurally aligned with the formation of political communities, natality inheres in the unfolding of politics toward the future, away from the past. Retaining an intergenerational link, the meaning of the past moves through natality as part of its ontological condition. And yet, this meaning remains partial, remedied by the necessary inclination that moves action away from the past towards the future. Unbalancing the axis of the past, unseating the normative force of tradition, natality problematises the givenness of what will inhere into the future, ensuring that it is newness that assumes structural primacy in the unfolding of history. The declarative claim of James Baldwin that 'we *are* history' attains to a critical force here.[64] Indeed, the same sentiment appears in Arendt's depiction of natality as creating 'the condition for remembrance, that is, for history.'[65] While we are our history, a fact that emerges in the context of natality, the realisation of this human status always already recalls the plurality of generations from whom we born. Which is merely to say, that insofar as being born of another, or Adrienne Rich reminds us, 'of woman born,' history always inheres in the formation of the present.[66]

What others have called the 'belatedness' of natality does not, however, mean passive resignation to history – Arendt's insistence on the social pariah as antinomy to historical or cultural

[62] Kant, 2006: 168.
[63] Cavarero, 2011: 211.
[64] Baldwin and Mead, 1971: 188.
[65] HC: 9.
[66] Rich, 1995.

expectation is testimony to this.[67] Like the inclined Madonna, the pariah moves outside of history's claim, unbalancing the present without succumbing to the future as a space of pure instrumentality. The arrival of the child, who appears '*among* us *here'* unleashes a new beginning, one that fate cannot prophesy, nor the past overpower. As the stage of *initium* is set, it is done in presence of otherness, vulnerability and dependence. In this space 'humanity as a whole delegates itself in the world and receives from the world confirmation of its own being as well as its *fragility.*'[68] Sown into the fabric of beginning, fragility establishes natality as a beginning without end, the durability of which depends on the support tended by others. If all this is gleaned from Cavarero's reframing of natality's existing coordinates, the question arises as to whether rethinking the locative '*here*' might yield similarly provocative glimpses into what Arendt's politics might possess. Responding to this qualification feeds into the question I answer in section 3.3: 'what does it mean to be born-in-place?'

Arendt was not oblivious to the obligations of intergenerational dependence raised by Cavarero. Her essay 'The Crisis of Education' is structured around an engagement with the responsibility generations have to posterity to ensure the survival of the world.[69] In the same essay she actually points towards the states of vulnerability around which Cavarero develops her postural ethics. Beyond the claim that the world must be prepared for the 'onslaught of new generations,' Arendt enjoins an injunction from birth, one that cannot 'be turned over to the special science of pedagogy,' but must continually be confronted. This injunction is the condition of natality, which persists as a feature of existence insofar as 'we have all come into the world by being born' and are called upon by those who seek our care.[70] Refraining from naïve sentimentality, Arendt recognises that to respond to this call is a matter of choice. She thus concludes her essay on education with the admission that 'education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable.' [71] Once again, this appearance of love in the context of

[67] On the belatedness of natality see: Levinson, 1997; O'Byrne, 2010. Arendt discusses the status of the pariah in her essay 'The Jew as Pariah,' (JW: 275-297).
[68] CBR: 180, emphasis added.
[69] BPF: 196.
[70] BPF: 193.
[71] ibid

ethics and the affirmation of the world as a locus of potential brings us closer to the argument of Chapter Six.

Further advancing her reading of Arendt as a figure of inclination, Cavarero describes the act of turning to face the arrival of children as an instance of inclined ethics. Here the response to the 'onslaught of the new' coincides with the affirmation of natality and plurality. Indeed, Arendt's comments on inclination, in addition to the implicit inclinations of natality, provide Cavarero with a point of semantic entry into Arendt's writing. Similarly motivated by a reading of Kant, in Arendt's 1965-66 course on Kant's moral philosophy, Arendt describes the act of inclining oneself in terms of a relational ontology: 'Every inclination turns outward, it learns out of the self in the direction of whatever may affect me from the outside world. It is precisely through inclination, through leaning out of myself as I may lean out of the window to look into the street, that I establish contact with the world.'[72] Beyond an ontology of the self, Arendt's comments equally attest to the relational foundation of reality. Yet for Cavarero interpretations of this inclined and relational conditions of plurality and reality cannot be separated from a consideration of the maternal, for it is here that the spontaneity of those conditions of political worldliness are grounded in the condition of natality. And so, Cavarero is emphatic about the displacement of primacy from the child to the others before whom the child necessarily appears, reminding us that it is the mother 'who earns herself a prominent role in the augural scene.'[73]

Cleaving together the relationality that is so central to the condition of being born with the irredeemable fact that it is the mother's exposed vulnerability who makes this moment possible, a particular framing of that relational paradigm assumes form. Namely, that while relationality is always already present in the condition of being born so too is an ineliminable status of dependence. Recovering Arendt's inversion of Kantian inclination, the condition of natality can be rethought as the condition of 'leaning out.' More than simply an inclination towards the others who populate my presence, Cavarero's depiction of natality's 'leaning out' can be refracted through history. The condition of being born, to return to Arendt's essay on education, implicates action in the progression

[72] RJ: 81.
[73] ICR: 116.

of history and the anticipation of the future. Read through a Derridean lens, Matthias Fritsch describes the natality as a gift something that cannot be returned to one's parents but passed on 'only to a third party, a future generation.' He clarifies this point, going on to note that while 'one can only give birth because one has been born of others…this does not make giving birth a mere species reproduction, a handing down of the "same" gift one received.'[74] Recognising that this would diminish the unpredictable and disruptive appearance of natality, Fritsch complements Cavarero's reading of natality and embeds it within a scene of plurality, simultaneously reaffirming a moment of relational ontology as it renews it.

Guenther similarly articulates natality in terms of a gift. Like Fritsch she puts this framing of natality to work in service of an intergenerational ethics. Remaining close to Cavarero's organising concerns of vulnerability and otherness, she develops an avenue unexplored by Fritsch, one that calls to mind the complexity of thinking the 'origin' or event that natality signifies. In an account of natality that would seem to simultaneously interweave the relationality of Cavarero and the historicity of Heidegger's Dasein, she writes:

> To be born is to be given to Others, such that I do not choose my own origin; further, it is to be given in responsibility, such that I do not merely "choose" to be good. I wish to recognize in the gift of imperative – and not merely the choice of an autonomous subject – to pass on this gift of time and responsibility. Perhaps it is only by giving to Others that we may recall the givenness of our own birth, precisely in its immemoriality.[75]

The immemorial event of natality, which sits paradoxically outside of me as an event experienced by others and yet at the very centre of 'who' I am as the central condition for my own being, divests the self of any claim to a totalized sovereignty. Precisely because we are born of others and remain, in a certain way, indebted to them as contingent to the very performance of our own natal condition, the 'gift' of being born coincides with the injunction to receive others. As Guenther goes onto write, the

[74] Fritsch, 2018: 94-5.
[75] Guenter, 2008: 2.

intermingling of giving and receiving in natality conspire in such a way that 'the givenness of birth suggests that my existence is not quite my own, that my time is already bound up with the time of the Other.'[76] Recalling that for Benjamin our coming was 'expected on earth,' Guenther reaffirms the recurrence of natality and plurality throughout time.[77] Each of these points regarding natality, its atemporality and 'gift-like' quality yield greater clarity still when read in connection to Cavarero's maternal account of natality. As the meaning of postural ethics as co-present in the event of natality are brought into sharper relief via accounts of history like those of Fritsch and Guenther, the richness of Arendt's natality as a source of both politics and ethics is made apparent.

3.3 The fore-right of being born-in-place

In an apparent turn away from the earthliness of natality and its embedding within the plural constellation earth-world-history, the previous two sections have sought to show how the redemption of another figure who, while largely absent from Arendt's reflections on natality – and hence from literature on natality – is nevertheless essential to its formation. More than simply an instrumental figure, however, recentring the role of the maternal incurs a radical extension of natality's ethical import. Returning to the role of the maternal and responding to the question 'what does it mean to be born,' thus establishes the ground on which to think an ethics of relationality. Framed in this way, answering the question on the meaning of birth becomes a provocation of those ethical paradigms that pass over the fact that humans are all born of a (m)other.

Played out on Cavarero's geometrical plane, this renewed interrogation of the maternal figure highlighted the ethical implications of action given its affinity to both natality and plurality. In other words, not only does action occur in spaces of original plurality, that scene is prefigured within a space of perilous inclinations, in which each subject exposes themselves and *inclines* towards the other in an act that precipitates both unpredictability and vulnerability. Redeeming the role of the maternal figure, Cavarero exposes the depth of natality's meaning while also positing an explicit challenge to the logic of Kantian verticality in which the figure of moral rectitude assumes prime

[76] Ibid.
[77] SW4: 390.

position. Yet 'postural ethics' form just one axis of ethical relationality drawn from natality. Responding to the question of space and the 'earthliness' of natality uncovered at the end of Chapter 2, in this concluding section I want to clarify the placedness of natality and the ethical import of the question 'what does it mean to be born-in-place?'

It is important to remember here that the role the earth plays in the conditioning of natality is not fixed. The earth, beyond the ebb and flow of its appearance between concealment and unconcealment, is only disclosed as a locus of ontological meaning in its relation to world and history. Once again then, to think the earth is to think the oneness of earth-world-history. I make this clarification because I want to emphasise that the form of rights yielded by the fact that we are born-in-place persists as a right-to-*placedness*. With this subtle movement from the question of place to placedness what assumes a central position is the active component of place, namely the way in which it comes into being as place. Rather than evince natality as the foundation of the right-to-place, the right-to-placedness enjoins the agonistic tension of both Heidegger and Arendt's understanding of earth and world while also recalling the intrinsic movement or agitation in earth-world-history. And so, as I advance a reading of natality as inaugurating a set of rights that inhere that original question of earth-world-history as place, it is with this concern for the agonism of place in mind. Indeed, this ambivalence regarding the status of place, which is understood to depend upon the sustained practice of dwelling and hence the ongoing realisation of that right-to-placedness anticipates Chapter Four where the affirmation of natality coincides with precisely this renewal of earth-world-history.

The proximity of natality to questions of rights was invoked in the previous chapter's discussion of totalitarianism and its attempt to determine admission to earthly appearance. Recalling this attempt to qualify the right-to-placedness, Arendt described one of the central contentions of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* as the attempt to provide a new political principle that would ensure human dignity as an earthly construct.[78] For Arendt the need for a right before all other rights became apparent in the wake of totalitarianism, when the destruction of human natality coincided with the negation of human rights. As Serena Parekh notes what Arendt was responding to was the relative

[78] OT: 629.

impotence of rights, namely that they 'were not inalienable, but rather radically contingent.'[79] Countering the impotence of this claim to inalienability, Arendt clarified her thinking in relation to natality, taking what had appeared only notionally in her dissertation to new lengths, hence the appeal to an earthly construct of human dignity.[80] With this renewed turn to human natality as one of the ontological conditions for the being of being human, what Arendt put into relief was the specifically ontological crime of totalitarianism: its challenge to the placedness of natal plurality.

And yet, for others responding to Arendt's discussion of rights and the ethical force of dignity, the centrality of the earth as a grounding construct slips from view. For instance, when Peg Birmingham, whose work on the intersection of natality and rights is perhaps the most prominent in this field, asks if Arendt provides the substantive ground on which to engage the question of rights, she simultaneously poses this question in terms of place *and* neglects the question of place. Birmingham's question then, as to whether Arendt's thought provides 'any normative basis for the "right to have rights" that is, for a universal right *to belong to a political space*' can be read as anticipating my own inquiry: what does it mean to be born-in-place?[81] Yet while Birmingham invokes the spatial quality of rights in her question, her answer rests almost exclusively on the temporality of natality; namely, that it is an-archic quality of natality that affirms the logic of rights. While the question of natality's temporality is indeed central to its realisation, something that I explore in closer detail in Chapter Four, it is the force of natality's placedness that provides a more compelling ground to the logic of rights.

Making explicit what Birmingham leaves under-explored gives rise to an account of rights as proper to the placedness of natality. In other words, returning to Arendt's first extended reflections on the political condition of natality in *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* a text where she discusses both the political principle of beginning and history's attempts to qualify life's being-in-place, provides the framework in which to think not only the fore-right of rights but the right-to-placedness. Without

[79] Parekh, 2004: 44.
[80] References to natality were only inserted into the text as revisions that Arendt made in anticipation for its publication. In its original format, written in 1929, Arendt makes references only to 'the fact that we have entered the world through birth' (LSA: 51). See Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark's interpretative essay that accompanies the dissertation for commentary on these revisions, LSA: 146-7.
[81] Birmingham, 2007: 763.

rewriting Arendt's position after the fact, the tropes of earth-world-history are latent in her own reflections on the right to have rights. Before Arendt finds an ontological remedy to the question of rights in the fact of human natality and hence the intrinsic right to appear, she describes the 'calamity of the rightless' in terms of the denial to belong to any community. Putting into further relief the spatiality that is implicit to the construct of the political community, which exists in concert with the 'space of appearance,' Arendt makes a point that is pivotal to the argument here: 'the fundamental deprivation of human rights is manifested first and above all in the deprivation of a place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective.'[82] Arendt could not be clearer: to be without rights is to be denied the realisation of the right-to-placedness. Indeed, the placed quality of rights – the right to appear, move, assemble, relocate, asylum, and migration – mark not simply the proximity of rights and place but their original inextricability.[83] Moreover, to be denied the right-to-placedness is to be denied that specific human capacity to disclose oneself. Recalling Heidegger's language of disclosure from Chapter One, eroding the potential to disclose meaning from one's placedness erodes the meaningfulness of place itself. Read in dialogue with Cavarero and the condition of plurality as co-present with placedness, the destruction of place as a locus of meaningful dwelling coincides with the destruction of plurality. Forced to occupy a space in the world in which the placedness of action is unrealisable, not only does the subject without rights lose their claim to placedness so too does the very structure of rights more generally.

As Arendt unpacks the deprivation of rights under totalitarianism, she turns both to the political principle evinced in natality and to the ontological fact of human earthliness. While it is already clear that natality cannot be thought apart from the earth, it is the realisation of natality in the world and as the condition of historical remembrance that recalls the ineliminable connection between natality and earth-world-history.[84] Hence, it is not simply freedom to inhabit the earth as a species-being that entails rights, nor the right to live within the limited ideological confines of a totalitarian

[82] OT: 387-8.
[83] The growing field of mobility studies has pushed research into this intersection, see Freudendal-Pedersen, 2016; Kotef, 2015; Squire, 2011; Urry, 2007. For a critical overview of the way in which movement is constitutive of political relations see Sheller's discussion of 'kinopolitics' (Sheller, 2018).
[84] HC: 9.

world that accords with the realisation of rights.[85] Rather it is the specific set of rights – the right-to-placedness – within the manifold plurality of earth-world-history that sets up the paradigm in which to think rights. Arendt enjoins the language of the constellation throughout *The Origins of Totalitarianism* writing that 'history and nature have become equally alien to us, namely, in the sense that the essence of man can no longer be comprehended in terms of either category.'[86] The extent of this alienation becomes apparent in her reading of Sputnik seven years later in *The Human Condition* discussed in Chapter 2.1.

Remaining in the context of *The Origins* however, Arendt cautions that humanity cannot be relied upon, in its alienated state from 'life itself' and the constellation of nature and history to provide a substantive basis for rights. Anticipating the lack of ethical grounding in the 'future man' of *The Human Condition* who relates only to those conditions he has created for himself, she describes the post-war situation 'in which "humanity" has in effect assumed the role formerly ascribed to nature or history' as producing a similar scenario: 'in this context that the right to have rights or the right of every individual to belong to humanity should be guaranteed by humanity itself.' She then cautions: 'it is by no means certain whether this is possible.'[87] Implicit in Arendt's claim here is the argument that the abstract entity 'humanity' cannot be relied upon to guarantee a framework of human rights. as she notes, 'one fine day' a highly organised 'humanity' might conclude that 'for humanity as a whole it would be better to liquidate certain parts thereof.'[88] What is thus necessary is a substantive basis on which to ground the fore-right that is the right to have rights or, what I prefer to think as the right-to-placedness, that is, the right to appear and give meaning to the human condition of being born-in-place.

[85] Arendt's discussion on the distinction between the subject excluded from the law and the prisoner, particularly in regard to their freedom of movement clarifies this point. Namely, that while the prisoner has less freedom of movement, they exist within a set of rights – indeed, their imprisonment rather than banishment from a community of rights signals their inclusion within the logic of rights – the one whose appearance in-place is no longer meaningfully realizable has no freedom. Hence, Arendt describes their freedom of opinion as 'a fool's freedom' for having been denied appearance in a plurality 'nothing think matters anyhow' (OT: 387).
[86] OT: 390.
[87] Ibid.
[88] OT: 391.

Establishing this affinity between the placedness of rights and the condition of being born-in-place can be put into greater relief via a return to Arendt's discussion of loneliness, a phenomenon that I introduced in Chapter Two as the 'essence of totalitarianism.'[89] Indeed, if the latter coincided with the absolute negation of rights, it was the insidious expansion of loneliness, which corrupts the integrity of natality and plurality – those conditions for political appearance and hence anathema to loneliness as such – that established the groundwork on which this perversion of rights could occur. Before the first loss of the rights, identified by Arendt as the loss of homes, which 'meant the loss of the entire social texture into which they [the recently rights-less] were born and in which they established for themselves a distinct place in the world,' what took hold was the sense of loneliness. Not simply the experience of solitude or isolation, but the inability to appear within a plural matrix in which meaning is the product of unconcealment, loneliness anticipates what it is to be denied the right-to-placedness. Hence, 'the calamity of the rightless is not that they are deprived of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness…but that they no longer belong to any community whatsoever.'[90] Namely, it is not the deprivation of those measures that affirm the quality of life that distinguishes the loss of rights, but deprivation of the conditions through which the placedness of natality is realised that marks their loss. This point becomes clearer once it is recalled that mere existence is not the activity proper to earth-world-history, but to the ontologically deprived space of a fixed entity, like the 'World' of totalitarianism which assumes an organising logic unto itself or the biological earth in the life of the *animal laborans.*

Arendt provides an example of the danger that befalls humanity when it forgets 'that man is only the master, not the creator of the world.'[91] On the attempt to qualify the definition of the 'human' and undermine the definition of plurality as corresponding to the fact of plurality's earthliness, she writes:

[89] OT: 624. On totalitarianism and loneliness, see Danoff, 2000; Gaffney, 2016; Schaap, 2020; Topolski, 2015: 51-56.
[90] OT: 386-7.
[91] OT: 395.

> If a Negro in a white community is considered a Negro and nothing else, he loses along with his right to equality that freedom of action which is specifically human; all his deeds are now explained as 'necessary' consequences of some 'Negro' qualities; he has become some specimen of an animal species, called man.[92]

While the individual immediately deprived of human rights and dignity here is clearly the 'Negro,' what is equally apparent is that any qualification of the human status yielded through the *disqualification* of human plurality undermines the very integrity of politics as such. Indeed, Arendt writes that such a community will 'end in complete petrifaction.'[93] Parekh clarifies this point by returning to the coincidence of self-disclosure in action, a mode of appearance that realises both natality and plurality: the conditions for politics as such. Once again connecting the question of place with that of rights, Parekh describes the rightless as 'having been deprived of a place in the world for meaningful speech and action…and so must be treated according to 'what' they are (Jew, Communist, homosexual, etc.)'[94] Unable to act in a meaningful way, in a way that would accord with their right-to-placedness, Parekh concludes that 'the impossibility of self-disclosure is an essential feature of rightlessness.'[95]

It is worth reiterating the connection between this argument and the earth-world-history constellation once again. There can be no permanence in this constellation, which assumes presence in what Heidegger calls the 'strife' of ongoing ontological agonism. Caught within a plurality of forces that become, that indeed *are,* only within a web of co-becoming, earth-world-history exists paradoxically as an archive of history *and* the gap between past and future in which history or meaning is made. Simultaneously moving forward in time yet retaining a claim to anachronism

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[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Parekh, 2004: 45-6. James Baldwin's invokes this same sense of a fore-right in dialogue with the irreducible quality of self-disclosure. In his account of Bigger Thomas in *Native Son* (Richard Wright) he connects Bigger's acceptance of the sub-human categorisation imposed upon with his failed battle for humanity. Baldwin's reading thus turns on the claim not that categorisation be rejected, but that humanity be recognised as always already inherent to the irreducible singularity of each individual. In other words, 'who' we might disclose within a plurality is something 'we need not battle for' but rather accept (2017: 23).
[95] Parekh, 2004: 46.

through ongoing redemptions of what was or what was present only in absence, earth-world-history insists on the irreducibility of relationality to *a* moment or *an* encounter. Out of this entangled co-being natality appears. Already an ontology of being is declared. When Arendt writes concisely in the German addition of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* that the life of the rightless is characterised as 'the abstract nakedness of being human' she describes a life that does not exist within this constellation.[96] To return to the earthliness of human existence is not to return to this life of abstraction but to one of original, irreducible difference. The 'unqualified, mere existence' of the rightless is the product of the enforced, ontological fixity on earth, world, and history; spaces in which reality has been ossified by the force of alienation.

If Cavarero's recovery of the maternal figure enables her to prompt a reconsideration of the ethical paradigm latent in natality, such that the realisation of natality in action might coincide with the affirmation of plurality and vulnerability, the recovery of natality's placedness might now be seen to provide a similarly substantive foundation to the question of rights. Without exploring the meaning of this placedness which forms a central condition of natality, which to recall emerges 'among us *here,*' the meaning of those acts – like totalitarianism and the production of the rightless – that operate at their most basic level to uproot, displace, and disqualify earthly life is diminished.[97] When Birmingham thus presents the claim that 'crimes against humanity are crimes that attempt to eradicate plurality from the face of the earth,' without interrogating the force of this location, she leaves open the question as to why it matters that crimes against plurality occur on earth.[98] And yet, much like Arendt's insistence that the event of birth is not simply a metaphorical basis for natality but intrinsic to its very meaning, neither can the sustained emphasis on the intersection of earth and plurality be overlooked; if only for the reason that Arendt's combats the earth-qualifying, world-denying logic of totalitarianism with a claim that human rights are an abstraction of the pre-political right to have rights, a right that is enshrined in human plurality, itself 'a human, earthly product.'[99]

[96] OT: 619.
[97] ICR: 108
[98] Birmingham, 2007: 59.
[99] PP: 93.

Bringing natality and the earth into dialogue with one another, indeed by showing natality as conditioned by the pre-political presence of the earth, and hence as always already in dialogue with the earth, greater insight is afforded into those actions ontologically grounded in natality and the contestations of natality seen in totalitarianism or the production of the rightless more generally. That the climate crisis now assumes a central role in diminishing diminish claims to place through the destruction and degradation of urban and natural ecologies reinforces the need to ground a basis of rights in something like the unchosen condition of human placedness.[100] Moreover, by continually thinking the framework of rights to which the condition of natality gives rise as the right-to-placedness and hence as distinguished by the ongoing affirmation to claim place and affirm a mode of dwelling in earth-world-history, the question of rights assumes an ontological weight that cannot be reduced to the mere provision of land. Reducing appearance to the question of immanent space rather than meaningful place undermines the original conditions of placedness and plurality that coordinate what it means to appear in place (namely, to be born-in-place) in the first place. What is thus essential to the placedness of natality is the capacity to continually claim place as meaningful.[101]

What has been brought into renewed consideration throughout this chapter is precisely this question of natality's placedness. Going beyond an exegetical reading of natality's placedness, I have followed the methodological paradigm of Adriana Cavarero to highlight the way in which natality informs the nature of action, the realisation of plurality, and more broadly the framework for human rights. Answering the original question 'what does it mean to be born-in-place' thus cannot be thought apart from the substantive ground of rights that it yields nor the relational ontology of plurality that it affirms. Exploring the full force of this question and these attendant considerations is the task of Chapter Four where I explore in detail what it means to realise natality and bring into renewed meaning the earth-world-history constellation into which it is placed. Where this chapter has thus outlined the way in which earth-world-history is prior to and in part conditioning of natality and the

[100] The intersection of human rights and climate change is well-documented, for an overview see for example: Atapattu, 2016; Humphreys, 2010. For a more precise discussion on rights and sea-level rise see: Byravan and Rajan, 2015; Sachs, 2008; Vaha, 2015.:

[101] Here I am primarily recalling the words of Mitch Rose who understood the fourfold in terms of the assertion of claims to dwelling, see Rose, 2012.

attendant spaces of rights, action, and ethics, Chapter Four aims to shed greater light on the way in which these ideas assume political force.

Chapter Four: Being-in-Place – The faculty of Natality

In the second half of Part II, I want to bring into relief the exact modality through which the right-to-placedness is realised, reframing the question from Chapter Three, 'what does it mean to be born-in-place' to 'what does it mean to *be*-in-place?' This transformation from an inquiry into the condition of being born to one that pertains to the fact of *having been* born, moves from a pre-emptive discussion about the anticipatory potential and meaning of birth in the right-to-placedness to the effective realisation of that potential and its meaning. Returning to the themes of dwelling and action, this chapter recentres the constellation of earth-world-history as the locus brought into being (or unconcealment) through the actualisation of natality. Building on the previous section of Part II, where the project was to locate within a 'placed' account of natality the grounds on which to think a structure of human rights, this chapter extends that claim to placedness in the realisation of place through the *faculty* of natality. Before I outline the exact movements of this chapter, I want to confront the risk of circularity that threatens to overwhelm the revelatory force of natality. Insofar as earth-world-history both precedes and conditions yet relies on and is reaffirmed by natality, clarifying the nature of disclosure and natality's unpredictable force is central to the force of my argument going forwards.

In Chapter Three, I relied upon Adriana Cavarero's parallel inquiry into the condition of human natality to highlight the way in which the conditions of natality can inform a broader political matrix incorporating ethics, plurality, and rights. In her critical rereading of natality, Cavarero explored the meaning of being born of a (m)other, ultimately offering an answer in terms of natality's reaffirmation of plurality and an ethics of vulnerability, one that she called a 'postural ethics.'[1] What this meant in terms of those actions that coincide with the realisation of the natal condition was the reaffirmation of plurality as a locus of vulnerability and dependence, tropes which Cavarero framed in terms of an 'asymmetrical relationality.' Here the danger of Cavarero's work being reduced to a circularity arises: natality is conditioned by its appearance within an asymmetrical plurality, one that

[1] ICR.

informs the ethical paradigm to which natality gives rise; in turn, the performance of natality – the realisation of that political condition of beginning – is coeval with the reaffirmation of human plurality and the inclined and asymmetrical nature of relationality. In essence then, natality both emerges from and latterly reaffirms the same set of ontological conditions. Cavarero returns to Arendt to remedy the apparent risk of circularity of a pure and immanent repetition by emphasising natality's intrinsic unpredictability: beginnings are always radical breaks, the consequences of which cannot be known in advance.[2] While it is plurality that reappears in natality, it is the paradoxical nature of that re-appearance as intrinsically original and hence unrepeatable that identifies it as such. Arendt's definition of plurality as the fact that 'we are all the same…in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live' serves as a further remedy.[3] For Cavarero, it is the introduction of a geometrical imagination that proves to be a particularly salient tool here: in contrast to the cyclical renewal of earth-world-history which would lend itself to the image of the ouroboros, Cavarero's reliance on intersecting lines to visualise natality's interruptive new beginnings functions as a challenge to the limits of an ontological circularity.[4]

While natality is itself then marked by a set of extant conditions, it perpetually and unpredictably alters what those conditions are.[5] An echo can be heard here to the agnostic movement that Heidegger first saw within the manifold conditions of the fourfold, which never remain the same yet persist in their 'oneness' by virtue of their change.[6] Or, borrowing from Heidegger's language of unconcealment, the disclosure of the self through natality is never a totalising event but one that points to a greater and unexplored depth. Yet what first appears as natality, or even as the fourfold or Arendt's conception of place, always already appears out of an existing set of organising relations. Weaving together this existing web of human relations from which the event of birth and the

[2] ICR: 112. On the Heideggerian origins of those mode of ontological inquiry that overcome 'circular reasoning' by returning to the ontic primordiality of concepts themselves see Villa, 1996: 113-117; see also, BT: 7-13.
[3] HC: 8.
[4] In apparent anticipation Cavarero's use of a geometrical language, in *The Life of the Mind* Arendt also relies on a geometrical plane to visualise the break made by natality's action (LMT: 208).
[5] HC: 9.
[6] The 'unstillable' quality of the fourfold can be felt in Heidegger's use of the present continuous to describe it: dwelling, preserving, presencing, all point to this sustained and outwards force towards unconcealment (PLT: 148).

condition of natality emerge with the meaning and change signalled by this event informs the richness that Arendt sees within the second political condition of plurality. As she writes in *The Human Condition,* the disclosure of who someone is and 'the setting of a new beginning through action, always falls into an already existing web where their immediate consequences can be felt.'[7] Yet rather than re-iterate this existing web, the disclosure of who someone is, which is simply the realisation of natality, starts 'a new process which eventually emerges as the unique life story of the newcomer, affecting uniquely the life stories of all those with whom [the disclosed] comes into contact.'[8] As the two conditions for political action as such, the insistent claim of natality and plurality to originality and unpredictability yields a form of politics premised upon the eradication of stagnation and an emphasis on the new. Indeed, Arendt's emphatic appeal regarding the unique newness of the self's disclosure (or unconcealment) will be central to the way in which I explore what I see in this chapter as a similar affinity between the unpredictable renewal of earth-world-history and the faculty of natality.

To summarise the overarching premise of Part II then, as I move forward from Cavarero's exegesis into the implications of natality's appearance within an ethical paradigm for which it is both origin and affirmation, is the claim that earth-world-history – the place of natality's dwelling – both precedes and is dependent upon natality. Rather than be reduced a collapsible circularity however, what this connection invokes is the agonism of Heidegger's original depiction of earthly concealment and Walter Benjamin's irreducible account of the origin. Indeed, in Benjamin's 'stream of becoming' through which earth-world-history is continually brought into unconcealment, natality figures as those 'eddies' that make becoming recognisable as such.[9] Remaining with Benjamin, in this chapter I want to think the unconcealment of earth-world-history in natality through the paradigm that Benjamin sets up in his use of political theology as a *praxis* of critique. Whilst it may appear a somewhat esoteric choice of methodology, Benjamin's political theology in fact offers a prescient mode of critique in which the object of criticism is also that which is sustained via critique. Rather than evince a

[7] HC: 184
[8] Ibid.
[9] OGTD: 45.

theocratic logic then, political theology provides Benjamin with a way of thinking that operates outside the limits of existing doctrine. Made possible by virtue of his rejection of an original, mediative presence of a divine figure, Benjamin sees within political theology a set of principles that resonate with the an-archic beginnings of natality.[10] Indeed, his rejection of the necessity to position political theology in the service of theological law and the force of theocratic scripture is central to his secularisation not simply of the theological *praxis* but his recasting of messianism within a secular paradigm. In fact, it is the centrality – and secularism – of Benjamin's messianism that will be pivotal to my reading of natality's actualisation within the earth-world-history constellation.

Attaining to an understanding of natality that accords with Benjamin's account of messianism coordinates the overarching project of this chapter. Having already established the placed quality of natality in Chapter Three, I have already gone someway in showing the link between action – the product of natality – and place. Namely, insofar as action occurs in place, it realises the intrinsic placedness of being. The affinity between natality and place thus exists in terms of being born-in-place and acting-in-place. And so, I begin this chapter not with Arendt whose writing I have already clarified but with Benjamin whose methodology of political theology warrants clearer explanation.[11] Mirroring the structure of Chapter Three then, this chapter begins with a discussion not of Cavarero's methodology but Benjamin's, outlining the way in which political theology can be used as a mode of critique. In section 4.2 I illuminate the potential of this methodology through the specific faculty of messianism, which Benjamin qualifies as a 'weak' potential endowed in each generation.[12] Taking seriously this qualification of messianic 'weakness,' I return to a dialogue with Cavarero on the tropes of vulnerability and asymmetrical plurality, creating space in which to think through the implications

[10] On the an-archic function of natality see, Birmingham: 2007.
[11] While the initial inclusion of a theological language could be seen to prematurely curtail discussions of earthly action, evident for instance in the Gnostic equation of the earth with fallenness, Benjamin approaches political theology less in order to evince a teleological end to action – as in one proposed through theistic intervention – and rather to highlight the necessary earthliness of a theological project. What is thus central to Benjamin's account of political theology is the inherent fact of place that, quite literally, grounds the project of politics. Instead of forsaking the earth for an otherworldly redemptive realm, Benjamin imbues the weak messianism of human action with an inextricable earthliness, what thus emerges as messianic renewal cannot be conceived apart from its earthly context. On the intersection of place and religion see Boscaljon, 2016; Hopkins et al, 2013; Medietta, 2011; Stump, 2008.
[12] SW4: 390.

of Benjamin's introduction of messianism as an inherently earthly and intergenerational faculty.[13] Anticipating section 4.3 in which I present a messianic reading of natality, section 4.2 presents a reading of Benjamin's varying qualifications of messianism as implicitly reinforcing the centrality of earth-world-history as the locus both preceding and sustained via natal (and messianic) action. In the final section I show how natality shares a common affinity with Benjamin's weak messianism as a *praxis* of worldly renewal. Complicating the linear movement between earth-world-history and natality, here I employ Anne O'Byrne's investigation into the temporality of natality. O'Byrne's invocation of natality's belated claim to meaning and the 'syncopated temporality' to which it gives rise advances my earlier analysis in sections 4.1 and 4.2 of Benjamin's fragmented history.[14] Articulating an account of time that is both delayed and revolutionary, I return to that original agonism of earth-world-history to highlight the way in which the faculty of natality interrupts and renews time, giving rise to an asynchronous conception of earth-world-history.

4.1 Political theology: Benjamin's godless theology

The proximity of Benjamin's work on political theology to that of Carl Schmitt threatens to undermine its application in the context of an emancipatory project. Published in 1922, Schmitt's reflections on sovereignty in *Political Theology* proved influential on Benjamin, and while the dialogue sustained between them as interlocutors on the theological resonance of modern politics has been subject to much debate and contestation, Benjamin considered himself methodologically indebted to Schmitt. When Benjamin sent Schmitt a copy of his 1930 publication *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama,* he credited the legal theorist's exploration of sovereignty in *Political Theology* as formative of his own thinking.[15] Further relaying his compliments, Benjamin testified

[13] A brief reference is made to this aspect of Benjamin's discussion on the intergenerationality of history in Matthias Fritsch's reflections on the earthly ethics of responsibility. Although the language of messianism is not explicitly incorporated into his reflections on the obligations linking generations, Fritsch nevertheless relies on a similar language of history's claims and the asymmetry of the 'gift giving' that is the passing over of earthly presence. See Fritsch, 2018: 91-98.
[14] O'Byrne, 2010**.**
[15] The letter is translated by Samuel Weber in his reflection on Schmitt and Benjamin (1992, 5). While the letter was published several years prior to that in Benjamin's *Collected Writings* edited by Rolf Tiedeman and published in 1980, it was left out of Benjamin's *Correspondences* collated by Scholem and Adorno and published in 1966.

that it was Schmitt's modes of research in his later writings that had confirmed Benjamin's own methodological entry into research in the philosophy of art. When Benjamin's correspondence was first published in 1966, this letter was left out. For Adorno and Scholem who collated the correspondence it served as an unnecessary link between two thinkers for whom political theology would serve diametrically opposed purposes. For Schmitt this would be advocating for an authoritarian state and the necessary existence of a legal-political order, one that was violently realised under Nazism, while Benjamin advanced political theology towards revolutionary politics, taking a 'messianic perspective that regards the legal-political order as destined to wither away.'[16] The affinity between their political theology thus falls away at the point of application. And so, while a connection existed between Benjamin and Schmitt at the level of theoretical concern and the shared conviction that 'in spite of secularisation, political phenomena are to be understood primarily in light of certain theological concepts and images,' it cannot be argued that this led to the realisation of a common project.[17]

Rather than reignite a debate around the varying degrees of divergence and convergence in their writing, a task already initiated by Ellen Kennedy's controversial 1987 article on the affinities between Schmitt, Benjamin, and other members of the Frankfurt School and later duly rebutted by Martin Jay and Ulrich Preuss, my task here remains concentrated on the specifics of Benjamin.[18] Beyond the rather straightforward way in which Benjamin develops a political theology that refers to the '(re)appearance of theological figures of thought in a political sphere that has become exposed to processes of secularization and neutralization,' the specific nuance of his project in fact works against the subsumption of politics to legal instrumentality.[19] It is the latter mode of critique that distinguishes – and complicates – his project and to which I will return in close detail in Chapter Five. Part of Benjamin's rejection of political and legal instrumentality (notions largely embodied in the image of 'the law') hinges on his development of a 'godless' theology, one in which the mediative presence of

[16] Ibid.
[17] de Wilde, 2011: 365.
[18] Kennedy: 1987; Jay: 1987; Preuss: 1987. On Benjamin's renewed application of Schmittian concepts see, Bolz: 1989; Heil: 1996; Weber: 1992.
[19] de wilde, 2011: 366.

the theological figure is removed and the subject of the *logos,* no longer coordinated in terms of an omnipotent God, turns to engage the problem of the origin.

I have already addressed some of the ways in which Benjamin complicates the degree to which the origin can be identified as an isolated moment. Putting into further relief Benjamin's interrogation of the origin, I want to introduce his framing of the origin in theological terms, namely as an anarchic instance embedded within a broader matrix of historical forces. Part of this account of the origin allows Benjamin to establish a critical distance between theology and the suspension of critique in the face of dogmatic scripture.[20] The force of this point will continue to emerge throughout this chapter. In essence though by holding on to the distinction between Schmitt and Benjamin, the revolutionary force of Benjamin's political theology can be felt: where Schmitt saw in political theology a framework through which to reinstate the necessity of legal orders, namely as the omnipotence of God reinscribed as a juridical frame to ensure state sovereignty over the people, Benjamin saw the framework into which he might interpolate a Marxist appeal for revolution.[21] Rather than preserve the law, Benjamin's intention was to break it. That being said, to reduce Benjamin's relationship to political theology to the service of fracturing legality would miss much of the nuance with which Benjamin incorporated it throughout his political writings. The perhaps overly quoted and certainly enigmatic reference that Benjamin makes to political theology as 'saturating' his thinking is thus worth taking seriously as a provocation regarding the extensive use of political theology in his writing and the limitations that arise in viewing it simply in reference to the structure of law or as antithetical to Schmitt.[22]

Gerhard Richter describes the self-conscious refusal of Benjamin's writing to provide stable concepts as itself a mode of resistance. Political theology proves to be no exception, which Richter describes as 'a variegated and heterogenous reservoir of discourse and reflection in [Benjamin's] corpus'[23] And so, when Benjamin writes in convolute 'N [Re the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress]' of *The Arcades Project* that 'my thinking is related to theology as blotting paper is related

[20] OGTD.
[21] On the distance between Benjamin and Schmitt see, Butler, 2012; de Wilde, 2011; Weber, 1992.
[22] *AP:* 471.
[23] Richter, 2016: 40.

to ink. It is saturated with it. Were one to go by the blotter, however, nothing of what is written would remain,' it is perhaps unsurprising that the reader is left with rather more perplexity than clarity regarding the status of the theological in Benjamin's writing.[24] While a section of 20th century thought has relied on the discourse of political theology 'to reconfigure both religion and politics in a new democratic constellation,' Benjamin's conceptualisation of political theology reveals an understanding of its application that cannot be readily subsumed under the secularization of theology.[25] And though Benjamin is not alone in exploring the complex resonance of political theology in this way, the singularity of his work does reveal something particular about his own use of the term.

Part of the particularity of Benjamin's status as a political theologian stems from a tension implicit in 'Jewish theology' generally. Unlike Schmitt's basis in Catholicism and the givenness of Christ as a mediative figure, who was later interpolated into the system of sovereign statehood in terms of the centrality played by legal governance, Benjamin's relationship to a theological figure is premised on an im-mediacy. In other words, where the trespassing of theological concepts into the political inhered for Schmitt 'the centrality of sovereign power to decide,' for Benjamin the equation of theology with the organising omnipotence of a sovereign overlooked the anarchic project of theology as a *praxis* of critique.[26] In other words, the theological is not coterminous with dogma – an equation which, for Benjamin, is to be found in the institution of religion – instead theology opens up rather than closes down the meaning of politics. The nuance of this claim pivots on a distinction at work in Benjamin's writing between the religious and the theological, moving from the operative force of political theology as the secularization of theology in political society to political theology in service of revolutionary critique. And yet, even this task of distilling the theological from the religious

[24] This translation, now standard, is provided by Eiland and McLaughlin, see Benjamin, *AP:* 471. Richter also calls our attention to the earlier Hafrey and Sieburth translation (1989: 61):

> My thinking relates to theology the way a blotter does to ink. It is soaked through with it.
> If one were to go by the blotter, though, nothing of what has been written would remain.

[25] Vatter, 2020: 1**.** On the resurgence of political theology at this time see, Gordon, 2013; Hammill and Lupton, 2012; Kaplan and Koshar, 2012; Stroup, 1987.

[26] Vardoulakis, 2009: 125.

is fraught. Insofar as Benjamin departs from a tradition of Jewish theology, the enduring presence of an organising theological figure must be confronted.

Hans Jonas captures this difficulty in his reflection on Jewish theology in the essay, 'The Concept of God after Auschwitz.' Although he writes in broad brushstrokes and misses much of the complexity of Christian thought, the general distinction he is drawing is between the world as an intermediary before the Kingdom of God and the world as itself godly. He writes: 'To the Christian (of the stern variety) the world is anyway largely of the devil and always an object of suspicion – the human world in particular because of original sin. But to the Jew who sees in "this" world the locus of divine creation, justice, and redemption, God is eminently the Lord of *history'* and hence the world must be contended with as the immediately theological.[27] In other words, there is no other divine space that might be contemplated through the mediative presence of God. Taking this further still, Gillian Rose contends that 'there is no Judaic theology – no *logos* of God.'[28]

A far more fruitful conversation on political theology can be found in the intellectual friendship of Benjamin and Gershom Scholem given that both shared a common investment in the role of the messianic in Jewish traditions.[29] Remaining within a far more religious setting, Scholem saw Jewish theology as a *praxis* that enabled the sort of critical political engagement seen as necessary within his social milieu of exiled German Jewish intellectuals, while at the same time advancing a program specific to the Jewish religion. This later orientation of theology was anticipated in the succinct account of theology that he provided in his memorial speech for Franz Rosenzweig in 1930 in which he located theology in the service of 'concrete questions':

> As for theology, the discipline ... that deals with man's innermost and darkest needs, that seeks to bare the riddle of his concrete existence and show him the deed he must do in order to uncover the path leading from creature to Creator theology is not a science of the essence

[27] Jonas, 1987: 3.
[28] Rose, 2017: 178.
[29] Scholem, 1995; see also Eddon, 2006; Mosès, 2009.

> of the divinity beyond creation but consists rather of the eternal questions of love and will, wisdom and ability, judgment and mercy, justice and death, creation and redemption.[30]

While Scholem would advance this study of political theology in the direction of restoring an intimate proximity to God, it nonetheless reveals his recognition of an anarchic potential in political theology (one that Benjamin will realise in the context of weak messianism).[31] Consistent with the redemption of Heidegger's divinities from their theocratic setting, Benjamin's theology invests the immediacy of human worldliness with a form of theological potential. Worldliness thus becomes a space of creation and anarchic beginning, not following the word of God but advancing precisely that Arendtian claim of unpredictable and plural beginnings, namely, the faculty of human natality.

Establishing greater distance still between the project of Benjamin's political theology and the centrality of God in both religious doctrine and classical theology, Richter turns to the etymological distinction at work between theology and religion. Playing on the imperatives at work in religion and theology, Richter positions theology far closer to the ontological-political stakes that will form the foundational basis on Benjamin's critique of modernity. Without imposing a metaphysical basis on Benjamin's writing, Richter's highlighting of an original etymological distinction allows the revolutionary dimension of Benjamin's theology to come into greater relief.

> Theology is derived from the Greek *theologia,* itself comprised of *théos* (God) and *logos* (study, sense, speech); it is the study of God or Gods and the scholarly engagement with the sources, scriptural or otherwise, undergirding belief. Religion, by contrast, derives from the Latin *religio.* According to Cicero, *religio* derives from *relegere,* meaning to regarter, to reconsider, to reread; but according to according to Lactantius' later account, *religio* derives from *religare,* meaning to re-bind, and, by extension, to re-bind oneself, through faith, to the Divine.[32]

[30] Scholem, 1988: 26.
[31] Scholem, 1995: 3; 19.
[32] Richter, 2016, 42. Arendt presents a similar discussion of *religare* in 'What is Authority?' (BPF: 126).

Although Richter goes on to say that for Benjamin both elements are at play, namely, scholarly engagement and a rebinding of the self, the figure of the divine as the locus of study is replaced with the more expansive concern for that which undergirds belief. And so, what appears as the object to which faith is reaffirmed is the pursuit of scholarly study itself, which beyond its Judaic setting in an original plurality – the Jewish study group or *chavruta* requires at least two participants – is reinscribed as a belief in the potential for worldliness. Extending this reading of Benjamin's theology back into the Heideggerian strife at play within the existential analytic earth-world-history, Richter's description of theology as 'that which generates writing, belief and presentation, while thinking…is there to cancel, to erase, to undo, to extinguish' yields new force. [33] The unfixable status of the origin, which Benjamin had already addressed in *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama* illuminates Richter's distinction here; the theological poses an interruption and in so doing inaugurates a new beginning. It is perhaps here that the link between natality and the politics inherent in theology or, at the very least, theology as understood by Benjamin, can be discerned.

Pursuing this link to the origin illuminates the resistance of Benjamin's theology to the logic of religion, I want to return to a citation first reference in the Introduction:

> Origin, although an entirely historical category has, nevertheless, nothing to do with genesis [*Entstehung*]. The term origin is not intended to describe the process by which the existent came into being, but rather to describe that which emerges from the process of becoming and disappearance. Origin is an eddy in the stream of becoming.[34]

If Benjamin's theology inheres as both scholarly engagement and the rebinding of the self to the object of inquiry that Richter describes, the status of that object as perpetually one of 'becoming,' unleashes him from the fixity of dogmatic religion. The 'origin' that organises theological study is thus precisely not the figure of the divine but the continual opening up of what it means to engage in

[33] Richter, 2016: 49-50.
[34] OGTD: 45.

such critique. Benjamin's relationship to 'God' thereby becomes the basis for an anarchic ground of experience, hence the investment of divine power in the act of revolutionary beginning. Without a fixed origin, the divine act of creation cannot be subsumed into the finitude of instrumentality. A particularly insightful overlap can be felt here once again with Jonas' account of God.[35] Where Jonas heralds 'becoming God,' he invests a fundamental anarchy into the theological. In Jonas' account, the status of God was so affected by the act of creation that God is now to be understood in terms of a continual relation to the object of creation, which itself persists as an entity of perpetual change, reset with the coming and going of generations. Ceding self-containment, 'becoming God' serves as an object only insofar as such scholarly engagement recalls the immediacy of the world as fraught with change.

As a *praxis* of engaging becoming, Benjamin's theology reveals its proximity to thinking the unconcealment of earth-world-history, itself a form of becoming, particularly as that unconcealment is actualised through the faculty of natality. Indeed, by further clarifying Benjamin's anarchic relationship to the notion of the origin, a parallel can be uncovered with Arendt's reflections on thinking.[36] Where Benjamin invokes the perpetual movement of becoming in the anarchic ground from which origins emerge, one which reappears in the methodological frame of political theology as perpetually without origin but always working within a notional origin, Arendt describes the process of thinking as one of perpetual 'rethinking,' where the object of thought resists identification. Relying on the image of Penelope's web, Arendt describes the movement of thought as that which 'undoes every morning what it has finished the night before. For the need to think can never be stilled by allegedly definite insights of "wise men"; it can be satisfied only through thinking, and the thoughts I had yesterday will satisfy this need today only to the extent that I want and am able to think them anew.'[37] Locked into a temporality of relationality, the becoming-God and the thought object persist as provocations, unknowable and locatable only in practice. From Benjamin's theology we thus learn, in Richter's terms that the 'unyielding vigilance of thinking… must take account of the very

[35] Jonas: 1987.
[36] LMW: 109-110.
[37] LMT: 88.

conditions that first make thinking possible.'[38] Mirroring the fragility of earth-world-history which remains in flux with the coming and going of generations, who interpolate meaning anew, theology progresses on the presumption of a foundational precarity. And yet, rather than undermine the project of theology *tout court,* the inter-articulation of theological thought and change, namely, its perpetual claim to renewal, reorients theology away from dogmatism to the anarchic ground of the origin. Without the threshold of religious or eschatological ends as prescriptive to the project of theology, Benjamin's political theology assumes methodological primacy in the organisation of revolutionary anarchism.

The force of this point can be made via a return to Schmitt. Schmitt's preoccupation with the theological omnipotence of legality leads him towards the preservation of sovereign law in violence, what Benjamin comes to understand in the 'Critique of Violence' essay as mythic violence.[39] In the essay he describes mythic violence in its archetypal form as 'a mere manifestation of the gods. Not a means to their ends, scarcely a manifestation of their will, but primarily a manifestation of their existence.'[40] The immanent proximity of godly existence to the dogmatic force of that presence reappears in Schmitt's political theology in the relation between the sovereign and the law. For Benjamin this renders the law inextricable from the means, which Benjamin identifies as inherently violent, that make and preserve it. What thus appears in the essay as the mythology of 'law-making' and 'law-preserving' violence, each of which emanate from the presence of violence as the organising origin of the law, is countered by Benjamin's unpacking of a political theology *without* proscriptive means and organised around the absent ground of anarchic potential.[41] A clear example of the former is apparent in the use of police force, particularly where the origin of police law is the preservation of racial segregation and is thus sustained through ongoing practices of racial oppression and marginalisation.[42] Unable to rid the law of its violent essence, which operates as its origin, the law operates as the mediative force linking the omnipotence of the sovereign and the people. Whether the

[38] Richter, 2016, 57.
[39] Sw1: 248-252.
[40] SW1: 248.
[41] The exact force of this point will be explored throughout Chapter Five and in section 5.4 specifically.
[42] Benjamin includes a brief discussion on the violence of the police in his essay on violence, see SW1: 243. On the intersection of race and policing see, Felker-Kantor, 2008; Muhammed, 2010.

rule of the sovereign is benevolent or not is beside the point for Benjamin, who sees within the violent origin of the law the loss of anarchic potential.

In contrast to the frontiers imposed by mythic violence, Benjamin develops an account of 'divine violence,' which disrupts the normativity of the law without imposing a new framework.[43] Recalling the anarchy of the origin, divine violence functions as the domain of the messianic. Playing on the distinction between messianism's destruction of the law in divine violence and the violence of law-making through a reading of the godly injunction, 'thou shalt not kill,' Benjamin makes clear the non-coercive claim on action made by the messianic. Indeed, it is the proximity of this commandment to the principle of justice rather than that of power that distinguishes the primordiality of the commandment to a discourse of violence. In other words, not only does the commandment precede the crime of murder, the meaning of 'thou shalt not kill' persists whether or not murder occurs. Organised around the role of justice rather than retribution, the commandment resists the punitive force of mythic violence and highlights a way in which to conceive the theological apart from the force of theocratic law. The theological dimension at play here thus unfolds 'not as a criterion of judgment, but as a guideline for the actions of persons or communities who have to wrestle with it in solitude and, in exceptional cases, to take on themselves the responsibility of ignoring it.'[44] Moving against Schmitt, Benjamin sees a mode of divine violence in theology that exposes and brings to an end the dialectic corrupting encounter of law-preserving and law-making violence; hence the priority of the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill.' Laying claim to action, the commandment becomes the basis on which to think the meaning of action, not the force of its transgressive retribution.

Maintaining this complication of the law, Benjamin extends his discussion to reveal the violence as it operates in the context of history. Rather than simply locating the law as the exercise of power over oppressed minorities, Benjamin locates its presence as unfolding across time, dissembling the status of the law's victim and its preserver. Identifying what he calls the normalisation of the 'state

[43] Derrida stages a challenge to Benjamin's position here arguing that a divine force can be located in the law-making institution as justice. The foundation of the law is then not coeval for the oppressive force of mythical violence but attains to a form of mysticism in the name of justice. See Derrida, 1992. For an extended commentary on Derrida's critique of Benjamin see; Sinnerbrink, 2006; Zacharias, 2007.
[44] SW1: 250.

of emergency' Benjamin appeals to a form of divine violence whose object is the mythic violence of historical normativity. The nature of this violence will be made stark in Chapter Five as I explore the historical violence of the climate crisis and its ongoing negation of the other through the exilic condition. Anticipating the project of the next chapter then, it is Benjamin's indictment of what he calls historical 'progress' that makes patent the need act 'into' history and 'wrest tradition away from conformism' (and exile).[45] Michael Löwy describes this encounter with history as giving political theology its aim, namely 'to achieve no less than a new understanding of human history.'[46] In an attempt to realise this project Benjamin turns to the theological trope of messianism.

Once again forgoing a mode of thinking determined by religious study of a mediative godlike figure, Benjamin incorporates a *weak* messianism into political theology, moving from an understanding of the Messiah as the completer of history to an idea of messianism as a human faculty.[47] Responding to the claim of the past, *weak* messianism coincides with historical materialism to disrupt the movement of past into present. This rupture in the linearity of history exposes the belated claim of the past over the present, thus effecting Benjamin's 'dialectics at a standstill' and reintegrating past, present, and future in the manifestation of divine justice.[48] It is precisely this rupture that hints at the potential of Benjamin to be read within the context of the climate crisis in which the past exerts an organising force over the present, not least in terms of the violent structures that maintain the crisis but in terms of the as-yet unrealised appeals for climate justice. In Chapter Five, I will address this directly through the language of history's 'after-lives' and thinking in terms of a contrapuntal plural temporality.[49]

4.2 Weak Messianism as *praxis* of Political Theology

With weak messianism Benjamin establishes himself at a critical distance from accounts of messianism that operate in the service of God and hence as defined in terms of the realisation of

[45] SW4: 391.
[46] Löwy, 2005: 1.
[47] SW4: 390.
[48] AP: 10.
[49] Afterlives of history is a notion that Benjamin reflects on in his writing on translation, yet here I am borrowing more specifically from Saidiya Hartman's use of the term, Hartman, 2007.

religious salvation. In place, messianism is put to work as the anarchic – and secular – beginning that will break away from the historical atrophy preserved in the violence of history's ongoing normativity. Rather than contend with the religious domain of the Messiah, Benjamin's discussion of the messianic, one which is tempered by the qualification of this secular faculty's intrinsic *weakness,* allows him to develop a sophisticated account of the messianism that appears in the context of human action. Once again emphasising the latent worldliness of his argument, one which hinges on the potential fulfilment of a Marxist revolution, Benjamin's *weak* messianism serves as a motif for the enduring potential not only for worldly action but for the historical nature of that action to reorient the givenness of the present. Anson Rabinbach thus describes the goal of Benjamin's messianic thought as not 'simply a redefinition of Jewish culture. [It] also emphasized a certain kind of intellectuality as politics, a spiritual radicalism that aimed at nothing less than "total transformation" of the individual and society.'[50] With his investment in secularization Benjamin makes a clear departure from the religious structures to which others, like Scholem, remain bound.[51]

In 'On the Concept of History*,'* Benjamin describes messianism in terms of the oppressed, its task, as noted, to 'wrest tradition away from conformism.'[52] Following this claim, Raluca Eddon positions messianic redemption in Benjamin's writing as his 'revolutionary idea par excellence.'[53] Elsewhere, David Kaufman describes Benjamin's weak messianism in terms of a suspension of 'the horrific train of "progress" by redeeming (and therefore fulfilling) the hopes of the past. Thus, the hopes and desires of the downtrodden serve as incomplete figures of redemption,' their emancipation entwined with the openness of the present.[54] While the messianic in Benjamin's writing lends itself to ready secular interpretation as a mode of 'rebeginning,' in which messianism becomes synonymous with the disruption of historical continuity, this move glosses over some of the more particular elements to which Benjamin ascribes this faculty of human messianism. In much the same way then that I resisted the metaphorization of natality in Arendt's writing, I want to challenge a similar

[50] Rabinbach, 1997: 30.
[51] A discussion of religion can instead be found in Benjamin's critique of capitalism, see SW1: 288-291.
[52] SW4: 391.
[53] Eddon, 2006: 263
[54] Kaufman, 2001: 172.

indexical reduction in Benjamin's writing. Taking seriously the conditions that Benjamin stipulates in regard to messianism then, not simply its 'weakness,' but its appearance in the coming and going of each generation *on earth,* I want to move slowly through its development in his writing, anticipating at each turn the ways in which it will reappear in Arendt's writing on natality.

While the critical distinction at play in Benjamin's writing between theology and religion has already been outlined, it is worth unpacking this differentiation as it pertains to messianism. Although Benjamin's writing was pivotal to the extension of theological thought beyond the parameters set up by Schmitt, Eric Jacobson highlights that by the 16th century a radical transformation had already taken place in regard to the exceptionalism of the messianic figure.[55] His study of the intellectual friendship of Benjamin and Scholem, *Metaphysics of the Profane,* begins with an account of this earlier disembodied or emancipated messiah.[56] Hence he points out that three centuries prior to Benjamin's writing, the human figure had already assumed a very active and central role in its own redemption.[57] Even here, however, the original features of Jewish messianism remained; like the Messiah, the messianic figure was understood as 'without features, yet performing distinct, predesignated historical acts.'[58] This type of discourse on the humanist form of the messianic is reflected in Benjamin's use of messianic tropes without succumbing to the necessity of the Messiah.

Central to Benjamin's appropriation of messianism is his own displacement of the messianic from the individual figure of redemption, the Messiah whose appearance is passively awaited, to a power weakly endowed in each generation. Dispersing this messianic potential across a generational plurality, one that is enriched if recalled in relation to Cavarero's intergenerational ethics of inclination, the realisation of messianism becomes the task of acting in concert. Borrowing from Arendt's vocabulary of the plurality of action, in which acting in concert is the modus operandi through which new beginnings are recognised as such, Benjamin's transference of messianism onto the people signals a similar investment in plurality.[59] The appearance of the messianic is thus

[55] Jacobson, 2003. On the history of the Messiah see: Neusner, 1987: 59-80.
[56] For further discussions of this intellectual partnership, particularly in the context of messianic thought, see: Mosès, 2008; Styfals, 2019; Taubes, 2016.
[57] Jacobson, 2003: Footnote 16, 239.
[58] Jacobson, 2003: 24.
[59] HC: 179-180.

described by Löwy not as a 'question of waiting for the Messiah, or calculating the day of his arrival…but of acting collectively.'[60] Benjamin makes this point in the second thesis of 'On the Concept of History': 'Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a *weak* Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim.'[61] Returning again to Cavarero, Benjamin's description of the claim made by the past brings into further relief the ethical implications of being born of a (m)other. Even before the placedness of this appearance is brought into question – a quality that Benjamin himself addresses in his appeal to the earthliness of generational appearance – the explicit reference he makes to an intergenerational obligation extends Cavarero's original ethical exegesis. What this means in terms of the question 'what it means to be born of a (m)other' is immediate: the fact of being is always already conditioned by its relation to the other to whom it has an ethical relation. Heidegger invokes a similar ethics of response in his 'Letter on Humanism'; namely, that every appeal from the other, while it may be ignored and discredited, is nevertheless heard. [62] To not respond or, in Benjamin's terms, to deny the claim of the past is thus already to infringe upon that conditional guideline for action's appearance. Here the meaning of the commandment 'thou shalt not kill' can be felt again. To appear in relation to another is to already be in an ethical relation with the other, such that every transgression of that relation coincides with the mythic violence of oppression.

Advancing the secular pluralism of Benjamin's *weak* messianism, a similar qualification is at play regarding the object of messianic redemption. Responding to the provocation that is the past's claim on the present, Benjamin locates the 'spark' which flames messianism's realisation in relation to the narrative of the oppressed. Again, what emerges as a central point of consideration here is the function of history as a site of violence. Rather than confront the sovereign subject as the figure of violence, it is the exclusionary hegemony of history that is challenged. Against the imposition of this historical frontier, in which the oppressed are denied historical appearance and the right to remembrance, messianism assumes a redemptive function. Recognising the oppressed and reorienting

[60] Löwy, 2005, 33.
[61] Ill: 246.
[62] Heidegger, 1976**.**

the givenness of the present, messianism – including the context described by Benjamin – offers up unimagined possibilities in an era described by Jayne Svenungsson as 'permeated by philosophical pessimism about the possibility of radical political change.'[63] Anticipating the messianic project of the next chapter, this 'radical change' will reappear in the critical historiographies Saidiya Hartman, Christina Sharpe and Kathryn Yusoff, each of whom read history against the force of racialised exclusion to which popular histories of the climate crisis frequently yield.[64]

In each of these contexts, the practice of critical historiography parallels Benjamin's messianic project of interrupting history and reaffirming rupture as the trace of human spontaneity, a power to create which itself can be understood as a form of messianism. Maintaining this claim to history's capacity to be retold, Benjamin overcomes the danger of instrumentalising the narratives of those dispossessed by historical conformism. In other words, instead of rewriting history with the teleological goal framework coordinated around an *ethos* 'for the sake' of history's oppressed, the messianic force of Benjamin's historical materialist assumes worldly implications.[65] Challenging the idea of a Hegelian dialectic of historical progression, Benjamin counters the very premise of progress, writing in *The Arcades Project* that one of his methodological objectives is 'to demonstrate a historical materialism which has annihilated within itself the idea of progress.'[66] He goes on to explain that this is precisely because the 'founding concept [of historical materialism] is not progress but actualization.'[67] Historical materialism thus 'aspires to neither a homogeneous nor a continuous exposition of history.'[68] In the context of the messianic rupture what is brought into being is history as an open space of creation. And so, anticipating once again the next section of this chapter, the fact that Arendt describes those actions that attest to natality as creating 'the conditions for remembrance,

[63] 2016: 154. It is worth noting that Svenungsson's reflections on messianism draw not from Benjamin and Scholem but Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek and Giorgio Agamben, a diversion from the seemingly more classical Jewish writers that highlights the extent to which political theology has been incorporated into seemingly more secular texts.
[64] Sharpe, 2016; Yusoff, 2018.
[65] Avoiding this instrumentalization of oppression and victimhood will be central to the concluding section of Chapter Five in which I seek to join others in decolonising the Anthropocene without simultaneously co-opting narratives of oppression 'for the sake' of historical or political emancipation.
[66] AP: 460.
[67] Ibid.
[68] AP: 470.

that is, for history' reveals a direct link to Benjamin's inauguration of history in acts of weak messianism.[69]

Examining this link to Arendt's writing, I want to unpack Benjamin's emphasis on the plurality of messianism and its occurrence across multiple generations. Indeed, this transition of messianic potential reaffirms Benjamin's rejection of sovereign omnipotence, further differentiating his project from that of Schmitt – or even from more religious projects such as Scholem's. This is important because it signals the ongoing project of history, both in a sense that diverges from eschatological or utopian narrative of history as 'completable' whilst simultaneously holding onto a sense of historical movement in the perpetual renewal of meaning. Hence, the historically totalising appearance of the Messiah, who 'completes all history,' is replaced by Benjamin with *weak* messianism, dispersed across humankind, displacing not only the singularity of the messianic and its appearance from without, but allowing it to be read in the context of human history.[70] Benjamin's aversion to a narrative of theological redemption is implicit in his claim that the 'storm of progress' that sweeps the present back into the future blows from Paradise.[71] His resistance to this biblical tempest, becomes part of his broader resistance to theological narratives of historical salvation. And so, it is in opposition to this movement, understood both in terms of historical conformism and those ends defined in religious terms that weak or secular messianism is realised.

Countering the force of history's tempest, in *The Arcades Project* Benjamin uses the notion of an afterlife in which to develop a critical account of historical understanding. Rather than simply pacify the storm then, historical understanding challenges the internal logic of what it means for the present to be overwhelmed by this anachronistic force. Deploying a definition of understanding that Arendt will adopt in her own reflections on the topic, he writes, that 'historical "understanding" is to be grasped, in principle, as an afterlife of that which is understood; and what has been recognized in the analysis of the "afterlife of works," in the analysis of "fame," is therefore to be considered the

[69] HC: 9.
[70] SW3: 305.
[71] See Löwy, 2005: 66 for a brief discussion of Benjamin's word choice.

foundation of history itself.'[72] The ideas that Benjamin introduces here will emerge centrally in the next chapter where I take up the implications of historical understanding more closely, particularly as they resonate with Saidiya Hartman's own use of afterlives as a historical theme.[73] I point to it here, however, to stress the way in which understanding and methods of comprehension, namely historical understanding *as* historical methodology, inform what it means for history to 'appear.'

Charging the past with the force of now-time [*Jetztzeit*] Benjamin articulates how the past, having been 'blasted out of the continuum of history' comes to assume new meaning in the present.[74] Reviving the meaning of what is 'past,' Benjamin's messianic historian, acting in concert with a plurality of others, brings into question the relation between past and present, and in so doing opens up to redirection the onward trajectory of present to future. From this, Benjamin's project can be distinguished from attempts 'to construct visions of a better world of transcendence,' but as Timothy Beasley-Murray shown to 'reveal the broken nature of the world of history…in anticipation of the voice of revolution that will come as destruction.'[75] Acting 'into' history in this way, Benjamin's appeal for a new image of history is revolutionary in the precise sense that it disrupts the conformist continuum that is the linear march from past, to present and on to future. Igniting the present as a space of creation, the historical materialist comes to view this moment as that 'in which time takes a stand and has come to a standstill.'[76] Rather than signal the collapse of history, this cessation of what is coincides with the rupture that prefigures the new beginning of the messianic moment. In the context of the climate crisis this rupture captures the historiographical break away from the conformist narrative that rejects the colonial origins of the crisis and recognises the tropes of racialised exclusion that maintain it.

Implicit throughout this reading on the afterlife of history is its underlying contingency: the claim that history – understood as the onward progression of time – could be otherwise. Bringing this

[72] AP: 460. Arendt's essay 'Understanding and Politics' advances a similar claim, positioning understanding as the 'unending activity by which, in constant change and variation, we come to terms with and reconcile ourselves to reality,' finally attaining a sense of home-being in temporality of one's life (EU: 308).
[73] Hartman, 2007.
[74] SW4, 395.
[75] Beasley-Murray, 2007: 133.
[76] SW4, 396.

contingency into consideration, without denying the violence of its past nor the ramifications of its effects, adds to the nuance of Benjamin's claim that it is not the Messiah who is sought but the incompleteness and fragility (or weakness) of the *messianic.* It is only the latter that legitimizes the experience of the oppressed in their oppression and hence is proper to the realisation of judgment. Willem Styfals clarifies this point, recalling that Benjamin 'was not interested in his [the Messiah's] *actual* coming but in the eternal *possibility* of his coming, and in this way this possibility influenced our perception of time and present.'[77] Styfals' point is that it was not the Messiah as such that was central to Benjamin's thought but the *messianic*. There is much to gained in emphasising the displacement of messianic actuality – which necessarily implies a form of eschatology and hence the finitude of historical or even philosophical speculation – in favour of a possible 'godless' messianism. What might otherwise be thought in terms of a 'post-theological' messianism coincides with the messianic historiography that I see as operating both in Benjamin's project and my own inquiry into the historical quality of earth-world-history. Indeed, Benjamin's emphasis on the messianic effectively anticipates my own focus on the *placedness* of being as opposed to the ontologically fixed *place* of being. Where the Messiah and place evince a sense of finitude and completion, the messianic and placedness of experience withdraws from totalisation, recalling Heidegger's language of concealment as the perpetual challenge to the unconcealment of worldly action.

Developing his own sense of an ethical framework in which a challenge to history is made, Benjamin's qualification of messianism as both an 'earthly' and a 'weak' faculty resonates with the earlier exploration of natality in dialogue with Cavarero. Yet here I refer not simply to the weakness of the subject who relies upon – or inclines towards – others in the realisation of their messianic potential but to the weakness of that scene in which they appear. Where Cavarero moved beyond the specificity of the child's vulnerability to comment on the fragility of plurality more generally and develop the geometrical plane of postural ethics as applying to whole communities, Benjamin's qualification of weak equally extends beyond the messianic subject. While in the first instance 'weak' is used to distinguish the messianic from the Messiah who would complete (and destroy) history it

[77] Styfals, 2019: 150.

also describes the status of history itself. 'Weak' encompasses the way in which history asserts a claim over the present: the present is 'weak' and vulnerable to this claim. In another sense still, messianism is weak insofar as the past remains something that must be actively fought for; in order to charge the past with the *Jetztzeit* of the present, what is 'past' must be constantly contested. To see more clearly what constitutes the 'weakness' of Benjamin's messianism, it is instructive to examine how it manifests in the revolutionary practices of Benjamin's historical materialist, the one through whom political theology finds this critical outlet. This is particularly important given the centrality of political theology and messianism to the project of resisting the organising violence of the climate crisis. In the following two chapters I will name this violence '*History'* and '*Future*,' re-appropriating the finality inscribed in the capitalisation of each word to indicate the exclusionary logic by which they operate. Understanding how weak messianism challenges the unfolding of violence will thus be central to the overcoming of *History* and *Future* in Chapters Five and Six respectively.

The role of the historical materialist is central to the way that Benjamin develops messianism as a historical construct. He describes their task in third thesis of 'On the Concept of History' as the recitation of history without distinguishing between 'major' and 'minor' events. Acting in accordance with the principle that nothing should be lost to the tide of history, the historical materialist calls forth the redemption of humankind, which is to say a humankind for whom 'the past has become citable in all its moments.'[78] Bringing the role of the historical materialist into perspective, Benjamin writes in *The Arcades Project* that 'for the materialist historian, every epoch with which he occupies himself is only prehistory for the epoch he himself must live in.'[79] In opposition to ideas of an eternal return imagined earlier in the figure of an historical ouroboros, he continues: 'there can be no appearance of repetition in history, since precisely those moments in the course of history which matter most to [the historical materialist], by virtue of their index as "fore-history," become moments of the present day and change their specific character according to the catastrophic or triumphant nature of that day.[80] The revolutionary intervention of the historical materialist is 'the interruption of the eternal return and

[78] SW4: 390.
[79] AP: 474.
[80] Ibid.

the coming of the most profound change. It is a dialectical leap, outside of the continuum, first towards the past and then towards the future.'[81] Arendt makes this point in her reflections on the position of truth in politics, arguing that 'even if we admit that every generation has the right to write its own history, we admit no more than it has the right to rearrange the facts in accordance with its own perspective; we don't admit the right to touch the factual matter itself.'[82] Building on Arendt's contribution to Benjamin's theses in 'On the Concept of History,' I take each to be offering a historical methodology of messianism, and with this an ethical account of what it is to engage with the claims made by the past on the present.

Löwy marks the strength of the affinity between messianic redemption and the links between generations, a link that I want to imagine in terms of 'intergenerationality,' by noting that: 'messianic/revolutionary redemption is a task assigned to us by past generations. There is no Messiah sent from Heaven: we are ourselves the Messiah; each generation possesses a small portion of messianic power, which it must strive to exert.[83] From standpoint of a generation, the past is made present through the imaginative storytelling of the historian, who makes present the past *in its present meaningfulness*. Opening up a critical distance between past and present in which the necessity to collapse one into the other is brought into question, the historical materialist becomes an arbiter for historical thought's critical potential to unpick the threads that have sutured certain events outside the history book of humankind. When Arendt describes refugees as the vanguard of their people, she echoes the sentiment that Benjamin ascribes to the act of messianic intervention.[84] Excluded to the periphery of history, Arendt insists that 'those few refugees who insist upon telling the truth, even to the point of "indecency," get in exchange for their unpopularity one priceless advantage: history is no longer a closed book to them.'[85] The 'indecency' of the outspoken refugee marks the collision of civic rights of nationhood, of rights assigned to those in place within the framework of national sovereignty with the 'fore-right' of placedness within earth-world-history. Indeed, when Arendt goes on to

[81] Löwy, 2005, 87.
[82] BPF: 234.
[83] Löwy, 2005: 32.
[84] On the status of the refugee as vanguard see, Agamben, 1995; Horst and Lysaker, 2019; Salih, 2013.
[85] JW: 274.

account for the deprivation of the latter as 'the deprivation of a place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective,' she provides the divine paradigm through which a messianic claim to rights will coincide with a claim to placedness.[86]

Here a clear link opens up with the project of thesis in terms of the indecent truth that scholars like Jason W Moore herald as central to the historical narrative of the climate history. In Moore's case, he appeals to a narrative of the climate crisis that will function as an 'uncomfortable story with uncomfortable facts.' He positions this need for discomfort in opposition to what he describes as 'comfortable stories with [albeit] uncomfortable facts' that typically organise histories of the climate crisis: petrochemicals, atom bombs, coal and energy transformation.[87] Indeed, it is precisely by recognising the uncomfortable history of the climate crisis that it becomes possible to inquire into the conditions of its appearance – amongst them the exilic condition (Part III). Arendt puts this point succinctly when she describes the crisis in terms of an opportunity 'to explore and inquire into whatever has been laid bare by essence of the matter.'[88] To locate a crisis as emerging from the collision of past and present effects an interrogation of those practices holding onto presence as the afterlife of history, which dissemble history's potential to be read otherwise.

Benjamin makes a similar point in thesis XVII of 'On the Concept of History' regarding the historical materialist for whom 'thinking involves not only the movement of thoughts, but their arrest as well.'[89] Assuming greater proximity to the constellation earth-world-history, Benjamin goes onto describe the implications of thinking's arrest, writing:

> Where thinking suddenly comes to a stop in a constellation saturated with tensions, it gives that constellation a shock, by which thinking is crystallized as a monad. In this structure he

[86] OT: 388.
[87] Moore echoes this sentiment later on in his essay. 'While there is no question that environmental change accelerated sharply after 1850, and especially after 1945, it seems equally fruitless to explain these transformations without identifying how they fit into patterns of power, capital and nature established some four centuries earlier.' (2019, 596).
[88] BPF: 171.
[89] SW4: 396.

> recognises the sign of a Messianic arrest of happening, or, to put it differently, a revolutionary chance in the first for the oppressed past.[90]

The Messianic arrest coincides with the reorganisation of the present and the emancipation of the future from the onward thrust of historical conformism. As it strikes at the core of the agonism of earth-world-history, messianism reveals the potential as yet still concealed therein.

4.3 *Weak* Messianism of the Natal Faculty

Surveying the claims just made, that political theology invites a critical re-examination of the laws that structure society and assumes a revolutionary force in the weak messianism of the historical materialist to disrupt those laws, I have made a case against the necessary synonymy between theology and religion. Namely, insofar as theology is invested in a *praxis* of critique and the pursuit of a justice that is not organised by the omnipotent presence of a mediating godlike figure but inclines away from eschatology towards historical emancipation, it departs from the logic of religiosity. It is precisely this move towards the theological as critique in contrast to the mere secularisation of religious law that allowed Benjamin to develop the revolutionary historical faculty of *weak* messianism. Revolutionary in its investment in the plurality of humankind, weak messianism forms part of history's encounter with the fullness of its past.[91] It is the radicality of this secular force, radical in its capacity to inaugurate the new and redeem those moments lost to history and hence to judgment also, that reappears in Arendt's faculty of natality.

Holding onto this secular radicalism as it pertains to both Benjamin *and* later Arendt circumvents the misreading that sees within natality a form of faith inextricable from religion. Critiques such as that levelled by Dana Villa that an 'amorphous religiosity' has been attached to Arendt's writing are thus resolved in advance.[92] In other words, insofar as Arendt's writing is viewed

[90] On presence of the term 'constellation' as a temporal figure in Benjamin's thought see McFarland, 2012.
[91] SW4: 390.
[92] Mavis Louise Biss describes Villa's concern as related to 'his conception of religion, according to which transcendence and faith are necessarily bound up with optimism and a longing for certainty' (2012: 767). And so, while I agree with Villa's criticism of religious conceptions of Arendt, insofar as they join together the

in proximity to theology as a Benjaminian pursuit of historical justice and *not* theology as the preservation of religious law, her 'faith' in action is grounded in the secular ontology of political theology.[93] Recognising this distinction, in my messianic reading of natality I am able to maintain Villa's position on Arendt: that 'we should not see [her faith in action] as a semireligious worship of the human capacity for initiation.'[94] As what in fact transpires is to the contrary: Arendt's faith in action coincides with her rejection of that which can be thought in terms of teleological scripture.

Where political theology serves Benjamin in his imperative to expose the mediative violence with which the law operates, both as an object of legality and as a threshold on the conditions for historical appearance, in Arendt's writing it reappears in the unpredictable spontaneity with which natality bursts into the world. Maintaining a claim to historical revolution as intrinsically messianic, Benjamin rejects the thesis that what is past has been forsaken, appealing instead to the weak messianism of every generation as a potential harbinger of revolution. This same sense of generational potential is felt in Arendt's writing, not least in her description of natality as a miraculous (and necessarily intergenerational) event but explicitly in her reflections on the 'second birth.' Described in *The Human Condition* as that moment when 'with word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world,' in the second birth 'we confirm and taken upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance.'[95] Having already made clear in Chapter Three, the first section of Part II, the ways in which natality is conditioned by its paradigmatic organisation within an ethics of vulnerability, dependence, and place, here I want to read the force of natality's realisation as latently messianic. Once again resisting the equation of messianism with theology as the study of a mediate godlike figure, an equation which I have already rejected and challenged above, my argument regarding the messianism of natality is guided by that same investment in the pursuit of historical justice and the undoing of claims to historical conformism.

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theological elements of her writing with these distinctly un-Arendtian ideas of eschatology or historical finitude, I nevertheless agree with Biss that Villa is too quick in collapsing the distinction between religion and theology.

[93] Villa, 1996: 269. On the intersection of Arendt's writing with theology see, Chacón, 2012; Gordon, 2007; Kahn, 2012; Kiess, 2016; Moyn, 2008.

[94] Villa, 1996: 270.

[95] HC: 176.

The necessity to engage history's oppressed not simply 'for the sake' of attaining judgment for the few, but as the fulfilment of that original ethical basis on which the fact of being rests is a position held by both Benjamin and Arendt. Where Benjamin rejected the violence of the law but saw within the commandment 'thou shalt not kill' a qualitatively different kind of injunction in regard to action, the interplay between *weak* messianism and the claim of the past's oppressed inaugurates a similar reframing of the groundwork on which the logic of historical appearance is engaged. Indeed, it is by virtue of the redemption of the oppressed as realised in *weak* messianism that something like the ethical conditions (themselves guidelines for action) outlined by Adriana Cavarero as inherent to the condition of human natality are realised. When Arendt thus describes the responsibility to understand what transpired under European totalitarianism, she assigns this task to humanity as a whole.[96] For Arendt then it is not simply the isolated figures of victim, witness and oppressor who are implicated in the worldly renewal that must be undertaken after violence, it is an injunction that is imposed on the plurality of humanity. This argument hinges in part on the claim that while it was the specific body of the victim that was desecrated under totalitarianism, it was the plurality of humanity that was diminished.[97]

And so, as I return to the ethical implications of natality, latent as they are in the worldly renewal that is the restoration post-war of human dignity, I depart slightly from Benjamin.[98] Where Benjamin saw the messianism of historical materialism as inhering the potential to realise a Marxist revolution, an allegiance that enabled him to 'side with revolutionaries in whose anarchistic violence [he] recognised traces of a divine law-destroying violence,' my project remains far more indebted to the question of history, and with it earth-world-history, as the product of natality.[99] And yet, it is this common affinity to history as the objective concern of both messianism and natality that organises the central claim that natality is latently messianic. Recalling the conditioning quality of earth-world-history in the appearance of natality, I want to suggest that its role in the formation of a right-to-placedness corresponds with the guidelines for action that Benjamin located in the commandment

[96] EU: 131.
[97] OT: xi.
[98] OT: 629.
[99] de Wilde, 2011: 366.

'thou shalt not kill.' The problematic that Benjamin sees in the commandment as resounding in each decision to act, reappears in the ethical force of earth-world-history. Part of this force is inherent to the right-to-placedness that I discussed in Chapter Three. In the context of natality's realisation of action, this force appears as the capacity of natality to disrupt its placedness in earth-world-history by acting 'into' the past to redeem the placedness of those previously denied historical appearance, an act which coincides with the realisation of Benjamin's weak messianism. While the anachronistic redemption of that right-to-placedness, the transgression of which has already occurred, has already been shown to serve as the guiding injunction for Benjamin's historical materialist, who redeems the past in order to actualise a Marxist revolution, I want to highlight the centrality of that same imperative to the natal actor as well. Indeed, the necessary intersection of past and present which is explicit in Benjamin's account of both historical materialism and weak messianism and invoked in the claim that 'like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a *weak* Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim,' reappears in my reading of natality's own realisation in action.[100]

While natality clearly evinces a new beginning and can thus be read as an interruption to history, the degree to which this occurs in dialogue with something like redemption of an oppressed past is less apparent. Though Arendt is emphatic that natality inaugurates new beginnings and signifies a break with tradition, and hence discloses something like that 'an-archic' beginning described by Peg Birmingham, that this rupture occurs in the process of renewing a relationship with the past is less easily discerned.[101] Indeed, to remain indebted to thinking the past would seem to undermine what is so central to natality in the first place. The need for a clarification thus arises in regard to the messianism of natality. Does the messianism of natality refer to its capacity to inaugurate new beginnings, evident in the unconcealment of earth-world-history through original, placed action, or is natality a latently messianic force in the Benjaminian sense of redeeming something in the past and, in this way, acting as a catalyst in the renewal of history? Rather than allow what I see as in fact a false distinction regarding natality to emerge; namely, as either mere renewal of

[100] SW4: 390.
[101] Birmingham, 2007.

the old or rupturing of tradition *tout court,* I want to turn to Anne O'Byrne's reading of natality's 'syncopated temporality' and show an alternative understanding of the way in which natality is always already that which appears as past.[102] Before I do so however, I want to briefly clarify the use of messianic language in Arendt's writing on natality.

Despite the sustained proximity that Arendt has to both biblical images of the messianic in the birth of Jesus and to more secular notions such as the 'miraculous' event of human birth, she never explicitly enjoins natality to a form of messianism.[103] And yet, her use of biblical imagery is more than just gestural. Where Cavarero called attention to Arendt's reference to the Gospels as a misattribution, Frederick Dolan recalls this moment as pivotal to Arendt's emancipation of birth from a theological religiosity to something more akin to Benjamin's hermeneutics of political theology.[104] What Cavarero thus read as a misattribution 'of great effect,' Dolan considers a form of silent 'editorship' in which Arendt edits the Gospels 'in order to avoid attributing divine, otherworldly status to the child who has been unto us so that it represents the possibility of redemption in "this" world.'[105] Casting off the otherworldly or divine intervention that cloaks the Christian text, Dolan in fact sees Arendt's editorial work as preserving a form of Jewish worldliness that maintains messianism as a subject of human affairs. Read in this way, Arendt's work shares Benjamin's sensibility that messianism is a fundamentally human potential, rendered through the work of a plurality that 'receives' the messianic as it responds to the claims of intergenerationality.

Extending Benjamin's reflections on messianism and political theology to include Arendt's faculty of natality presents a unique insight into the way in which action, the activity 'ontologically rooted' in natality, intersects not simply with the immediacy of plurality but the plural conditions at play in earth-world-history.[106] Recalling that earth-world-history is not simply antecedent to natality but is itself the locus of action, the constellation attests to the impossibility of ascribing an 'origin' to

[102] O'Byrne, 2010: 101-106.
[103] HC: 246-7. Despite this reticence on Arendt's behalf, several inquiries into the messianism of natality and Arendt's writing more general have been undertaken. See Biss, 2012; Gottlieb, 2003.
[104] ICR: 108.
[105] Dolan, 2004: 606.
[106] HC: 247.

the scene in which action appears. It both always already was and yet only is by virtue of its renewal in natality. Arendt thus describes the web woven of human realities that appear in the constellation as coming 'into existence through the addition of infinite improbabilities.'[107] As one improbability among many, each action reorients and reframes the ontological meaning of that web, unconcealing something within earth-world-history and reorienting what it means to relate to place. Given the antecedence of earth-world-history, every act of natality is thus in some way an engagement with what is past. Yet more pressingly, natality belies a form of messianism given its own belatedness, its own resistance to immanence. It is the delayed disclosure of the meaning of natality, which appears in Arendt's conviction that history is only ever comprised of beginnings which continue to begin and hence defy claims to immanent totality or completion, that O'Byrne incorporates into her reading of natality's 'syncopated temporality.'

O'Byrne explores the 'belatedness' of natality in connection to the plurality upon which it is contingent. Highlighting the interplay between the actor and those who recognise the force of natality as such, O'Byrne effectively anticipates the scene of ethical relationality so central to Cavarero's reading of natality at the moment of birth. Where Cavarero emphasises the role of the (m)others as establishing the conditions of asymmetrical dependence, O'Byrne's reading hinges on the temporality of this scene, arguing that while being born is an event for the family into which the baby arrives, 'only later did it come to be my birth' in the sense proper to the one who is born.[108] Rather than remain bound to the materiality of this event, O'Byrne draws this argument out in relation to the historicity of action, the 'only later' recast as its delayed meaning. What thus emerges as the 'syncopated temporality' of natality then allows her to complicate the fixity of action's (or natality's) origin, thereby introducing a sense of temporal plurality. The meaning of natality, if it can be termed in such axiomatic and singular terms is simultaneously the product of those 'first' and 'second' births

[107] PP: 112. At the same time Arendt stresses the pre-existence of the world, writing that 'to be alive means to live in a world that preceded one's own arrival and will survive one's own departure (LMT: 20). On the level of temporality, Arendt's position invokes something akin to Said's contrapuntal time and the necessary intersection of difference within time itself (Said, 2000: 191).
[108] O'Byrne, 2010: 103.

that Arendt describes. The resonance of action departs doubly from the event of birth, its meaning refracted through the two natal conditions of plurality and time. As O'Byrne writes:

> The temporality of natality is such that I am with others before I can grasp who I am and who I am as a finite being. The origin from which I am removed is certainly mine, but it also belongs in an important sense to others. Our coming to be is therefore never a singular or solitary emerging into being; it is always, from the very start, a matter of plurality.[109]

The connection O'Byrne draws between natality and plurality is explicit. Yet what sits beneath her argument is the transformative function in regard to being as the meaning of natality is belatedly recognised. The reverberations of this moment which extend from the past (the moment of natality) out into the present necessarily implicate natality in what was antecedent both to that initial sense of rupture and its ongoing meaning.

O'Byrne brings this point into sharper relief in a way that yields greater meaning for the current reading of natality's realisation as the unconcealment of earth-world-history. Turning to face the moment of birth's retreat from immanence, O'Byrne clarifies what it is that is sought in attempting to understand the meaning of natality's disruptive appearance. As she writes, 'it is not a matter of encountering the nothing [prior to my appearance], but rather, and precisely, of encountering the when-I-was-not-yet.'[110] This confrontation with the not-yet assumes far greater weight when it is not limited to the subjectivity of experience but read as belonging to history itself. What figures in this instance as the 'not-yet' is now something far more expansive than the immediacy of the self, as what is now under consideration in this encounter is the state of history prior to the appearance of what is now considered – like the one who is born – to have a natural claim to appearance. What the syncopated temporality of action as the content of history reveals is an encounter with the movement of history itself. Understood in this way, every realisation of natality, which is to say the belated encounter with natality, is an encounter with its prior absence. Holding on

[109] O'Byrne, 2010: 106.
[110] O'Byrne, 2010: 104.

to O'Byrne's original nuance, absence here is not the same as the void of historical emptiness but the when-this-was-not of history. Without reducing natality to a form of apophatic historicism, of clean breaks between 'then' and 'now,' natality aligns with the agonistic space that Arendt understands as the present.

Arendt describes the present through a retelling of Kafka's parable 'HE,' in which the unnamed eponymous protagonist contends with the conflicting forces of past and future. Anticipating Cavarero's geometrical retelling of natality, Arendt describes the disruptive present as a moment of collision or a gap in time that orients away from the march of history. Cast anew as the 'diagonal force of history' here natality 'breaks away from the two forces both unlimited as to their origins, the one coming from an infinite past and the other from an infinite future' and establishes a new historical orientation.[111] This agonistic clash, beyond its resemblance to the strife of Heidegger's earthly unconcealment, indicates the messianic in Arendt's writing. This conjunction of past, present, and future in the affirmation of action is messianic in the precise sense that it complicates the linearity of those temporal forces that emerge in the ontological complexity of earth-world-history.

Returning to the 'not-yet' of O'Byrne's natality, to act into history and begin anew is to recognise that from which one departs. In turn, as natality assumes its meaning belatedly, to understand earth-world-history as simultaneously withdrawing from view and being brought into appearance is to recognise the movement of history and the co-implication of past, present, and future. When the recognition of natality as the right-to-placedness confronts the 'rightlessness' of denials to place that occurred in history it coincides with that messianic potential that Benjamin inscribed in each generation to redeem the narratives of those oppressed by history. Holding onto the agonistic encounter of natality and its absence what comes into consideration is precisely that messianic pursuit of Judgment Day that Benjamin saw as so central to the project of the historical materialist. The anachronistic or belated realisation of the right-to-placedness and hence the natal appearance of those historical others previously ignored, takes place in every instance when the integrity of plurality is brought into question. What is thus implicit in the limited histories that organise the appearance of the

[111] BPF: 11.

climate crisis, which I will address in detail in Chapter Five, is the sustained negation of rights on which they hinge, namely the fore-right that is the right-to-placedness. Not only does this right impart a claim to literal place but to the narratives that give texture and meaning to place, namely to the intersection of place and history in the 'storybook of mankind.'[112]

Refusing to tell the history of this crisis – and indeed any crisis – in the fullness of its appearance, what is fractured is not only the state of reality, which cannot claim to be woven out of the plurality of temporalities and individuals who constitute history, but the very logic of rights as well. In other words, without the realisation of each claim to the right-to-placedness what is diminished is both the integrity of rights and that place, earth-world-history, to which each right attests. The challenge that Benjamin mounts in his appeal to historical impartiality and weak messianism and that Arendt builds upon through her insistence that history must engage the open belatedness of natality's beginnings, is precisely against the force of conformity that denies the fullness of history. That this right-to-placedness is so often recalled after the temporality of appearance as such*,* namely as the redemption of history's past (although conceivably ongoing) oppression is indicative of natality's capacity to enact a messianic transformation of earth-world-history. In other words, not only does the condition of natality – as explained by Cavarero – establish a set of ethical paradigms that inform the meaning of action, the actualisation of natality in action exerts the kind of dialectical challenge intrinsic to Benjamin's thesis on messianism.

Where belatedness comes to serve as one of natality's defining temporal features this also challenges the specificity with which the 'origin' of the natal moment can be thought. While a clear instance of the origin is presupposed in the literal event of birth, as O'Byrne explains, the meaning of natality cannot be contained in this event alone. And so, even when Arendt, drawing on Kafka's parable claims that a clear historical origin can be discerned in that gap in time that is occupied by humans who exist as historical forces, she cannot claim that the meaning of beginning is fixed to this moment. Insofar as natality is contingent upon a necessary plurality, and plurality itself is refracted through the distinct temporal experiences of each individual, natality betrays its own syncopation.

[112] HC: 184.

Equally important here is the worldliness of this temporality; despite its apparent endlessness natality does not transcend the human world, rather it exists in memory and the fragility of human togetherness.[113] Holding onto the revolutionary break held within this moment thus becomes its own form of messianic realisation; of sustaining the new in spite of those forces that seek history's atrophy. In a sense then, the temporality of natality resonates with the perpetual move of earth-world-history away from unconcealment. The meaning of action – where action relates here both to revolutionary breaks in history and to those miraculous appearances that each individual makes in the world – is then a form of revelation in the precise sense of Heidegger's language of unconcealmeant. What thus figures as an agonistic disruption coincides with the opening up of the present, the declarative moment of natality now percolating throughout time and place.[114]

Cleaved to the moment that slips between the original appearance of natality as conditioned within that constellation of earth-world-history (principally its organisation within an ethics of placed plurality) and its disclosure in action, weak messianism illuminates this moment as the intersection of past, present, and future. Much like the 'flash' that coordinates Benjamin's intervention into what is 'past,' the weak messianism of natality recalls the original anarchy of its own ontological entanglement. Assuming the double sense that Peg Birmingham describes as the 'an-archic principle of natality,' natality is both the origin of rights and the meaning that comes from being born-in-place, to which I also add that it is the faculty through which that right and meaningful placedness are actualised.[115] The immediacy with which Arendt connects action to the disclosure of worlds and the creation of historical conditions is supplemented by the original earthliness that underpins the very ground of natality. And yet, it is her affinity with Benjamin's disruptive history that structures the link between the messianism of action and the agonistic strife of earth-world-history. This resistance to a linear development of the constellation resonates with Arendt's repudiation of Hegelian standards of historical progression in favour of disruptive beginnings. Villa captures this challenge to Hegelian criteria as summed up by the maxim from Cato: 'the victorious cause pleased the gods, but the

[113] HC: 188-192; 207-8.
[114] PLT: 44-45. For an overview of the way in which notions of the Open develop in Heidegger's writing, see Schatski, 1989.
[115] Birmingham, 2007: 766.

defeated one pleases Cato.'[116] Central to this rejection of Hegel is the fragility inscribed in the products of natality, the vulnerability of worlds to ruin, of history to the decay of memory and the earth to its qualification under ideological regimes like totalitarianism.

Here again the various valences of Benjamin's original identification of messianism in terms of its 'weakness' resound. And so, as I approach the close of this chapter and in anticipation of the historical inquiry into those oppressive histories that deny the right-to-placedness within the context of the climate crisis, I want to return to those themes of political theology and a *praxis* of critique without the centrality of an omnipotent figure. Having already noted Villa's antagonistic relationship with the theological dimensions of Arendt's work, which he persists in overlaying with religious connotations, the proximity with which he establishes her writing to Benjamin's recalls the force with which messianism operates as a form of worldly redemption. In Villa's words then:

> Her "faith in action" does not rest on the futile desire to resurrect the agora in contemporary society; rather, it reflects a continuing wonder at the fact that political action persists in the various "defeated causes" our political historians relegate to the dustbin of history.[117]

And again, like Benjamin, Arendt reclaims that weakness as part of the condition for political action, establishing a direct link between the fragility of human affairs and the integrity of history's full meaning.[118]

Bound by fallibility, weakness, and mortality, Arendt's invocation of the miraculous or messianic beginnings of which humans are nevertheless capable serves as a provocative alternative to the possibility of theistic redemption. Without knowledge of history's end – an openness that shadows the present as both an omen and a blessing – Arendt evinces a sense of the world that persists as a space of creation.[119] What is implicit to this openness, however, is the necessity to re-engage the question of

[116] Villa, 1995: 267, Arendt, 1982: 5.
[117] Villa, 1995: 270.
[118] EU: 132.
[119] Again, it is this quality of the present that aligns with Heidegger's account of the Open, particularly when read in relation to the historicity of Dasein as a form of historical response.

worldliness. The theological thus arises as the methodological introspection of a world that revisits its presumptive origin without losing faith in the absence of historical finality. Indeed, it is precisely the infinitude of history that exerts a claim over the present, and over every act of natality, which is always already inscribed in the movement of history and thus called upon to respond to its movement. The intersection between Arendt and Benjamin's work – already apparent in this common investment in the disruption that beginnings pose to the linearity of history – assumes a critical force as the integrity of history's normative framework is emancipated from the idea of a mediated or prescribed end. Whilst for Benjamin the emancipation of history occurs as the theological intervention of historical materialism, which redeems history's 'detritus' and exerts a divine violence over the iron grip of existing legal-orders, Arendt relies on natality as an instance of an-archic, theological beginning. Mavis Louise Biss describes Arendt's introduction of natality's temporality as taking place 'in time without positing an end to time or history.'[120] The centrality that natality assumes as a category in political thought thus occurs insofar as it 'shapes an anti-apocalyptic, anti-individualistic and this-worldly version of redemption.'[121]

Forgoing the messianic depth of natality which reveals itself not only in those moments of crisis when the need to begin is essential but in each instance of action insofar as the activity of being is constantly in a state of evolution, is to lose what is intrinsic to natality itself. Part of this latent messianism is apparent in the 'belatedness' of being, the fact that each life comes to be in a world that was already in existence and hence is always called upon to respond to a world 'behind' it. When Arendt describes in terms of the 'newcomers who are born into the world as strangers,' she points to the syncopated temporality of existence.[122] Taking up the charge in the following chapter to respond the belated meaning of the world, unexamined in the blind movement that is history's conformist claim to progression, I engage both the messianic currents of Arendt and Benjamin's writing and the need to think the interarticulation of both plurality's subjects and plurality's temporality. Recognising that what is present as present is the suspension of history and the moment before the now slips into

[120] Biss, 2012: 769.
[121] Ibid.
[122] HC: 9.

the future, this chapter will affirm the agonism of Kafka's 'HE' and, if not disrupt, at minimum call into question the givenness of history's linearity.

Part III

The Exilic Condition

Chapter Five: The Anthropocene or *History* as Exile

> *Every generation confronts the task of choosing its past. Inheritances are chosen as much as they are passed on. The past depends less on "what happened then" than on the desires and discontents of the present. Strivings and failures shape the stories we tell. What we recall has as much to do with the terrible things we hope to avoid as with the good life for which we yearn. But when does one decide to stop looking to the past and instead conceive of a new order? When is it time to dream of another county or to embrace other strangers as allies or to make an opening, an overture, where there is none? When is it clear that the old life is over, a new one has begun, and there is no looking back?*[1]
> - Saidiya Hartman

The image of the 'flash' appeared in the previous chapter as the spectre of hope that, seized upon by the historical materialist, would account for an act of historical disruption. As Walter Benjamin writes, 'the past can be seized only as an image that flashes up at the moment of its recognizability, and is never seen again.'[2] Grasping hold of the past in this way an attempt is made to 'wrest history away from conformism,' rupturing its onward movement and opening 'history' up to recreation.[3] In this turn away from conformity, the tropes of messianism that pervade both Benjamin's account of critical history and Arendt's political faculty of natality appear. Throughout Part III, I aim to 'operationalise' the messianic force of natality, showing how history can once again be redeemed as the 'storybook of mankind' capable of realising the claim that 'plurality is the law of the earth.'[4] Locating this 'flash' in the context of the Anthropocene and the violence of its colonial origins, this chapter is coordinated following Benjamin's 1920-21 essay 'Critique of Violence.'[5] Emboldening Benjamin's threefold reading of violence as law-making, law-preserving and finally, law-destroying, I rely on the words of Saidiya Hartman, Christina Sharpe and Kathryn Yusoff to give texture to the materiality of violence in the Anthropocene.

In part, furthering the exegesis of Benjamin's writing that I began in the previous chapter, it is equally their work on which I rely in order to unpack the complex history of the climate crisis.

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[1] Hartman, 2007: 100.
[2] SW4: 390.
[3] Ibid.
[4] HC: 184; LMT: 19.
[5] SW1: 236-252.

Seemingly in dialogue with Benjamin's investment in the 'tradition of the oppressed,' Hartman invokes a methodology of engaging with the 'after-life' of the past, Sharpe develops a rhetoric of thinking in 'the wake,' and Yusoff challenges the forgotten 'pre-history' of the present.[6] Building on structural readings of violence, perhaps clarified most recently in the work of Judith Butler, I will use the term *History* to name these acts of violence.[7] Henceforth, *History* serves as the name for that law forged in the logic of colonialism and slavery and preserved in the violence of settler-colonial claims to place and the status of capitalism after slavery. *History,* which names the first exilic space that I explore in Part III, is maintained in the ongoing exploitation of the other, whose claim to place is undermined by *History* which insists upon their exclusion, a mode of dispossession that I understand as a form of 'present absence.'

More emphatically, *History* serves as the index for those forces which calcify the agonism of earth-world-history, fixing time and place, producing the ontological hollow space Earth-World-History. As a site of exclusion, *History* is the force of exile that assumes a normative presence in the Anthropocene. Overwhelming the present as a space of original creation, *History* thereby assumes presence as a narrative of exclusion, overriding claims to placedness and the diverse origins of earth-world-history. *History,* then is the story of the Anthropocene that forgets the history of colonialism and slavery that is the bedrock of its foundation. *History* not only emanates from exile, insofar as it is normalised as a praxis of domination, it *maintains* a hold to exile.[8] Where Benjamin locates a tradition of the oppressed who oppose conformism, I argue for a similar antagonism between the exilic and *History*. Disrupting the physicality of exile, the account of the exile that I develop foregrounds the inability to 'dwell' historically.[9] Imagined in the introduction using the examples of the convergence of Australia Day and Invasion Day or the formation of Israeli statehood and the Palestinian *nakba,*

[6] Hartman, 2007; Sharpe, 2016; Yusoff, 2018.
[7] Butler, 2020.
[8] I take the formulation 'praxis of domination' from Coulthard, 2014.
[9] In the Introduction I gestured to the coincidence of Australia Day and Invasion Day and the Declaration of Israeli Independence (although here there is a difference of one day) as exemplary of the way in which exile can occur 'in time.' Refusing historical impartiality what is enacted on these days, and indeed in all instances when the truth of history's violence is denied, is a new form of violence that enforces silence over those who may continue to appear 'in place' but cannot appear in either memory or the formation of history. See n.44 in the introduction for a survey of literature on these subjects.

historical exile appears in the context of the climate crisis in the refusal to tell the impartial and colonial history of its origin. Rendered exilic by the force of *History* which insists upon the telling of 'comfortable stories with [albeit] uncomfortable facts,' in this chapter I endeavour to remain bound by the need to develop an *uncomfortable* story with uncomfortable facts.[10] Arendt engages in a related endeavour when she declares that the price of being at home on earth after the unearthliness of totalitarianism coincides with being at home in the 20th century. For this return from exile, Arendt's writes that is an 'interminable dialogue with the essence of totalitarianism' must be undertaken.[11] It is the cognate task of engaging the *History* of the climate crisis that I undertake here, recognising this dialogue as the new price of being at home in this century.

Staged over three sections, this chapter advances a reading of the Anthropocene informed both by Benjamin's reflections on history discussed in the previous chapter and his 1920-21 essay 'Critique of Violence.'[12] Further clarifying Benjamin's writing through the introduction of my own motifs of exile or the exilic condition and the earlier development of natality's messianic force, the threefold critique of violence outlined in Benjamin's essay on violence organises the structure of this chapter. Where Benjamin interprets violence in terms of its law-making, law-preserving, and law-destroying function, I attach an analogous reading in relation to the establishment, maintenance and later, resistance to, the exilic logic of the Anthropocene. While I will begin with a description of what exile means before turning to interpolate the meaning of the exilic in the execution of Benjamin's threefold critique of violence, I want to emphasize at the outset that to be an exilic subject is to be a victim of violence. Moreover, it is important to clarify that although Benjamin names the 'law' as the object of violence, his argument transcends the frame of legality: the law operates as an extra-legal framework that coordinates modalities of realising placedness. The law, in a meaning specific to this chapter, is the exilic condition imposed by *History* as exile.[13] Employing a vocabulary that resonates with this

[10] Moore, 2017: 595.
[11] EU: 323.
[12] SW1: 236-252.
[13] Elsewhere the term 'exile' has been used to define the status of climate change refugees. Sujatha Byravan and Sudhir Chella Rajan identify 'climate exiles' as those who will lose 'their ability to remain well-functioning members of political societies in their own countries, of through no fault of theirs' (2015, 21). The invocation of place that is at play here, the loss of society, as well as the allusion to historical responsibility, highlights a currency between the two uses of the exilic status. See, Byravan and Rajan, 2006; 2015.

project, Sharpe's inquiry into to enduring legacy of slavery describes the way in which 'slavery was not singular; it was, rather, a singularity – a weather event or phenomenon likely to occur around a particular time, or date, or set of circumstances…in what [she calls] the weather, *antiblackness is pervasive* as *climate.*'[14] Here, I would argue that antiblackness and settler-colonialism are pervasive as *History*. In addition to these liminal impositions over modes of coming-into-place in earth-world-history, this *History* also operates a quite literal violence in the guise of planetary instability and extreme weather.

5.1 Walter Benjamin and Exile: Made, Preserved, Destroyed

While *History* remains the objective source of violent tension in my argument, I concede that destroying its claim to normativity will not reverse the Anthropocene, nor its manifestation in the literal violence and extremity of the climate crisis. And so, before I unpack the meaning that Benjamin attaches to his threefold reading of violence and how it parallels the violence of *History*, I want to pause to consider what it means to locate this violence in the context of exile, in part extended introduction, this section has the merit of highlighting the nuances of Benjamin's reflections on violence and how they pertain to the exilic spaces of the Anthropocene.

Borrowing from Edward Said's reflections on the temporally disjointed life of the exile, John Barbour describes exile as 'a way of dwelling in space with a constant awareness that one is not at home. The exile is oriented to a distant place and feels that he [*sic*] does not belong where he lives. *Exile is also an orientation to time*, a plotting of one's life story around a pivotal event of departure and *a present condition of absence* from one's native land.'[15] The life of the exiled is marked by the impossibility of return, for while the literal ground of exilic homeland may persist as place, any notion of return must contend with those claims made by history. In other words, the homeland is not merely spatial but temporal as well, to return would thus presuppose a movement back in time to the homeland pre-invasion, pre-destruction and pre-historical. The exile is marked by this specific

we are proposing would be built upon
well-established,
[14] Sharpe, 2016: 106 (emphasis added).
[15] Barbour, 2007: 293, (emphasis added).

orientation to history, where past and future collapse as spaces in which dwelling is possible. Unable to dwell within the constellation of earth-world-history, in which place comes into being as a temporalized experience, the exilic experience erodes the plurality of that space, marking place as a site of erasure (Earth-World-History). Yana Meerzon further clarifies the muteness of exile which 'dignifies a displacement and *a falling out of time phenomenon*.'[16] When the homeland of the exiled ceases to exist, the exilic subject assumes an existence outside of time and place, outside of earth-world-history.[17]

The irredeemable exilic homeland, its temporal status as 'no-longer,' does not, however, preclude the exilic subject from re-entering the plurality of earth-world-history. Indeed, for Said, 'what has been left behind [in the experience of exile] may either be mourned, or it can be used to provide a different set of lenses.'[18] The proximity between exile and memory, insofar as what is remembered of the past coordinates what it means to be an exile, also opens up space in which to determine how the future might be imagined. Implicated in a plurality of temporalities, the exilic subject can be described in terms that Said borrows from the study of music as possessing a 'contrapuntal' awareness of reality.[19] To view the world 'contrapuntally' is to approach it through a lens that is tuned to a plurality of visions, in which old and new 'environments are vivid, actual, occurring together.'[20] Achille Mbembe invokes a similar modality of thinking through multiplicities via the concept of fugitivity. Applied to the experience of slavery, he describes the way in which 'the captured subject must actively engage in a relation of multiple doubles and multiple selves. He or she must develop an extraordinary capacity to become imperceptible and unassignable, to continually shift from one self to its alternate, to inhabit the tiniest of cracks and fissures.'[21] The dwelling place of Mbembe's captured subject echoes the 'tiny fissures' in which Benjamin locates redemption from catastrophe.[22] Drawing together the condition of placedness with the emancipatory potential of the

[16] Meerzon, 2017: 25.
[17] The extra-terrestrial and perhaps extra-historical qualities of Sputnik discussed in Chapter One resound here.
[18] Said, 2000: 23.
[19] Said, 2000: 191.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Goldberg, 2018: 212.
[22] SW4, 185.

oppressed, I want to introduce in the two chapters of Part III a praxis of challenging the state of exile. Read through the constellation earth-world-history in its exilic state, I show resistance to be formed through the attainment of a contrapuntal and fluid claim to dwelling.

Paralleling Said, Mbembe describes the way in which he works with the archive: 'to mourn what is lost in a way that does not dwell in the trauma.' Refusing the eternal return of violence, he assumes a mode of mourning that, following Benjamin '[puts] together once again the debris and the fragments of that which has been broken and [tries] somewhat to provide them with a space of rest,' finally creating a sense of Arendtian plurality as he renders 'the world habitable for all, again.'[23] Intrinsic to this form of dwelling is resistance both to a politics of lament or nostalgia and to the normativity of *History's* exilic force. The connection between exile and beginning is echoed in Gershom Scholem's account of messianism, which he argues is 'exercised almost exclusively under the conditions of exile.'[24] While Scholem speaks to the specificity of Jewish history, the resonance of his words can be felt even here in the context of the Anthropocene. While exile dissembles the plurality of voices that dwell in earth-world-history, insisting upon the normative homogeneity of *History*, the exilic persist in *History's* marginalia, their voices colouring and giving depth to *History's* shadows. Creating space to hear these experiences, to deconstruct *History* in their wake is the project of law-destroying violence, the redemption of the tradition of *History's* oppressed (Chapter 5.4).

In her account of slavery, Saidiya Hartman describes the status of the slave as one 'torn from kind and community, *exiled from one's country,* dishonoured and violated,' such that the slave becomes archetypal as 'the outsider.'[25] Invoking a temporal displacement, she goes onto describe the slave as 'the perpetual outsider.' Examining this sustained exclusion, Hartman's inquiry into slavery operates in precisely this space of temporal delay. She thus argues in terms that I want to reframe through the law-making and preserving violence that Benjamin develops that 'if slavery persists as an issue in the political life of black Americans, it is not because of an antiquarian obsession with bygone days or the burden of a too-long memory, but because black lives are still imperilled and devalued by

[23] Goldberg, 2018: 215.
[24] Scholem, 1995: 2.
[25] Hartman, 2007: 5, emphasis added.

a racial calculus and political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago. *The is the afterlife of slavery.'*[26] Elsewhere in the same text, she alludes to the exilic condition of appearing in absence when she writes that 'the slave is always the stranger who resides in one place and belongs to another.'[27] It is this dislocation in place that defines what it means to live in the afterlife of exile, the present of the exilic condition. I referenced Benjamin's discussion of the 'afterlife' in the previous chapter, but it is the historical specificity that Hartman gives to it in this citation that I want to centre as definitive of 'afterlives' from here onwards.[28] Indeed, it is this afterlife that parallels the extra-legality of Benjamin's violence and its 'after life' as *History.*

In these extra-legal acts of law-destroying violence, the exilic resist *History*. In the Anthropocene this resistance coincides with the naming of that *Historical* violence in the events of colonialism and slavery. In other words, 'beyond denoting a new geological era, the Anthropocene encompasses a broader set of questions,' one of which pertains to the enduring legacy of historical structures.[29] Assuming the historical narrative of the Anthropocene that begins with the invasion of the Americas as my point of departure, the questions that arise here encompass not only the redistribution of flora and fauna and hence the immediate environmental impacts of this moment but also the processes of human violence put in motion.[30] And so, what I see as developing out of the original violence of the Anthropocene coincides not only with the violence that Hartman sees as radiating from the hulls of slave ships but with the violence of Benjamin's law-making.

Operative beyond the limits of the legal decree, Benjamin sets up a relation between violence and the extra-legal frameworks of normativity that assume structural functions akin to the law. Understood by Sharpe in terms of the racialised ground that normalises the murder and subjugation of African American bodies, these extra-legal yet largely still state-sanctioned instances of structural

[26] Hartman, 2007: 6, emphasis added.
[27] Hartman, 2007: 87.
[28] AP: 460.
[29] Schlosser, 2020: 3.
[30] It is worth remembering, of course, that Columbus' departure from Spain was made possible by the exilic exclusion of Spain's Jewish population in the 1492 Alhambra Decree. Columbus begins his diary charting his travel across the Atlantic by writing: 'Thus, after having turned out all the Jews from all your kingdoms and lordships, in the same month, your Highnesses gave orders to me that with a sufficient fleet I should go to the said parts of India...' (Olson and Bourne, 1906: 90).

violence assume a particularly insidious form in the so-called 'slow violence' identified by Rob Nixon. Nixon's slow violence 'of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space [as] an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all,' coincides with the ripples sent forth through history by the geological impacts of colonialism.[31] Captured in the image of the slave ship, whose 'wake,' or track through water, assumes a centripetal force, Sharpe deploys the language of 'wake work' to think the history that 'ripples' outwards from the supposed singularity of the event.[32] The amplification of this 'wake' attests to the reach of Nixon's violence, coalescing with Benjamin's preservation of the law in the renewed claims to settler-colonialism and the ongoing exile of indigeneity. Resonant here is Glenn Coulthard's definition of settler-colonial relations as 'characterized by a particular form of *domination;* that is, it is a relationship where power…has been structured into a relatively secure or sedimented set of hierarchical social relations that *continue to facilitate the dispossession* of Indigenous peoples of their lands and self-determining authority.'[33]As the structural force of violence assumes a normative claim over history in the state-sanctioned exposure of certain bodies to the literal violence of the Anthropocene – perhaps most starkly in instances of extreme weather – this second mode of violence, or 'slow violence,' marks the loss of earth-world-history as a space of production, showing instead its subsumption to the violence of *Historical* normativity. In other words, if the spaces of dwelling become spaces of exile – either the literal incorporation of exilic forms in the corporeal vulnerability of bodies to weather or the historical exile of limited historical perspectivism – the ontological agonism so central to earth-world-history is lost.[34]

The scope of Benjamin's violence to operate beyond the limits of the legal institution is apparent in this move away from the supposed legality of violence to the extra-legal perversion of earth-world-history. Benjamin himself attests to the extra-legal scope of violence when he declares

[31] Nixon, 2018: 2**.** David Archer invokes a similar tempo of the climate crisis in the language of atmospheric carbon dioxide's 'long tail' (2009).
[32] Sharpe, 2016: 2.
[33] Coulthard, 2014: 6-7.
[34] Poignant examples of the former are felt clearly in the city of New Orleans but extend to incorporate the slums exposed to toxic waste and the Pacific Islands whose survival is brought under question by increasing sea-level rise. See: Davis and Todd, 2015; Pulido and de Lara, 2018; Sealey-Huggins, 2018; Vaha, 2015; Woods, 2017; Yusoff, 2018.

that 'all violence is either law-making or law-preserving.'[35] Butler similarly advances a claim regarding violence that 'without disputing the violence of the physical blow,' shows its persistence in the guise of social structures or systems.[36] Rather than obfuscate the status of the law, what Benjamin points to with this claim is the extra-legal force of the law. Namely, it operates beyond the immediacy of the legal institution, perhaps most clearly in the insidious forms of structural violence that persist as the denial of indigenous presence (and the unceded sovereignty of this prior claim to place). Indeed, my concern here is with precisely the extra-legal laws of historicism, operative in the limited histories that recreate Arendt's frustration at the refusal 'to sing the deeds of the Trojans no less than those of the Achaeans.'[37] In other words, it is precisely that violence of colonialism and slavery at the origin of the Anthropocene that I argue goes onto assume a status of 'law-preserving violence' in the exilic and limited histories of the Anthropocene.

And yet, Benjamin locates a third form of violence: the divine act of law-destroying violence. Exerting an uncanny prescience, Benjamin describes the 'epoch founding' function of divine violence, hinting at the possibility of historical redemption in the impartial narratives of the Anthropocene's inaugural moment. Here again the allusion to Scholem's exilic messianism, of the new beginning emerging out of (or perhaps in spite of) exile, can be felt. Described in terms of the 'abolition of state power,' divine violence coincides with the anarchic capacity of Benjamin's *weak* messianism.[38] Indeed, where Benjamin describes the latter as endowed in each generation, he gives an account of divine violence as 'not only attested by religious tradition but also found in present-day life.'[39] Operative beyond the bounds of religion, divine violence foregrounds the messianic force of historical materialism. In the context of the climate crisis, divine violence can be heard in the appeals to decolonise the Anthropocene.[40] In the final section to this chapter I will unpack the force of this argument.

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[35] SW1: 243.
[36] Butler, 2020: 2.
[37] BPF: 51.
[38] SW4: 390. See also; Eddon, 2006; Mosès, 2009.
[39] SW1: 250.
[40] Birch 2016; Davis and Todd 2017; Estes 2019; Gilio-Whitaker 2019; Weizman and Sheikh 2015.

Advancing the argument that colonialism is an 'invasion come to stay,' naming the colonial origins of the Anthropocene opens up space for a discussion about the way in which the Anthropocene can function as a form of violence insofar as it perpetuates and renews neo-colonial or settler-colonial claims to place.[41] It is this renewal that is the preservation of the law (*History*) through violence. What Toula Nicolacopoulos and George Vassilacopoulos refer to in terms of the 'being of the occupier,' namely the demand to assert presence over the unceded sovereignty of indigenous peoples thus becomes analogous for the way in which violence is exercised in the maintenance of the Anthropocene.[42] In other words, what each refusal to read the history of the Anthropocene in recognition of the forms of colonial exile that precede it attests to, is the dependence of normativity, in this instance that of settler-colonialism, on a form of violence. This amounts firstly to a violence of bodily dispossession as bodies are denied physical appearance and, secondly, to the denial of appearance 'in history,' through the refusal of historical impartiality. Moving forwards with this claim, in section 5.3 of this chapter I enter into sustained dialogue with Hartman and Sharpe as a way of unpacking the resonance of *History's* violence. My aim here is to show how the racialised origins of the Anthropocene have incorporated an exilic force that coincides with their respective projects of thinking in the 'afterlife' or 'the wake' of the past. Further clarified through Benjamin's discussion of law-preserving violence, my claim here is that *History* is operative as the preservation of colonial violence. Contrasted with a critical historiography that recognises the tradition of the oppressed, within the context of the Anthropocene, *History* operates to dissemble colonialism. Enfolding Kathryn Yusoff's appeal to *History's* 'voidings,' or those excluded from historical appearance, throughout this section, I highlight the way in which the normative force of colonial violence is manifest in the law-preserving violence of the climate crisis. Yusoff sees this violence as intrinsic to the methodologies of history that she calls 'white geology,' a violence of methodology that operates as an extension of a colonial project of racial exclusion.[43]

[41] Wolfe, 2006: 388.
[42] Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos, 2014.
[43] Yusoff, 2018.

Turning to Benjamin's appeal for an anarchic and divine violence, that is, violence that operates against the logic of instrumentality, in the concluding section I ask if the critical historiography of projects like Yusoff's, that read history 'against the grain,' is capable of dismantling the structures of violence that pervade the climate crisis.[44] Following the exegesis of Benjamin's divine violence provided by Luis Guzmàn, this section will uncover an intersection between divine violence and modes of resisting *History's* exilic force.[45] Without reducing the tradition of the oppressed or bodies of exiles to a status of means, this conclusion navigates the complex presence of the oppressed without re-interpolating them into a system of ends-oriented violence. And so, in this closing section I invoke the acts that perform a messianic intervention against the force of *History* to disrupt the exilic condition that distinguish contemporary experiences of dwelling in order to reaffirm the original antagonism of earth-world-history as a locus of perpetual renewal. Here I raise the question as to whether Benjamin's appeal for a divine violence to counterpose the preservation of law-making/preserving violence might exist within the emancipatory spaces opened up by decolonialism. The intersection of the divine and the messianic is maintained in reference to those attempts to decolonise the Anthropocene and expose the racialised borders by which it operates.

5.2 Law-Making Violence: A History of Exile

In one of the few instances in which Hannah Arendt's political framework has been applied to considerations of the climate crisis, Ari-Elmeri Hyvönen concludes his discussion by arguing against the relevance of thinking eco-destruction in terms set out by Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus.*[46] Deployed by Walter Benjamin in his essay 'On the Concept of History,' the angel appears in the service of historical critique.[47] Moving backwards into the future, Benjamin describes the angel as forced to look

[44] Yusoff, 2018. 'Against the grain' is Benjamin's description for the project of historical materialism, SW4: 392.
[45] Guzmàn, 2014.
[46] Invocations of the *Angelus Novus* as a resource to engage the climate crisis, as well as Benjamin's historical materialism do, however, appear with a degree of consistency in literature on the climate crisis. See, Ford, 2013; Latour, 2010; Menely, 2014. On Arendt and the climate crisis see; Chapman, 2007; Hamilton, 2016; Ott, 2009; Voice, 2013; Whiteside, 1998.
[47] SW4: 392.

upon the detritus that piles at its feet.[48] In opposition to this violence, the historical materialist seeks out a 'flash' that might permit a reorientation away from the angel's backward trajectory.[49] Relying on this image, Hyvönen argues that despite the wreckage of the climate crisis that now piles at our feet, the status of the angel cannot be ascribed to the climate crisis.[50] Here, the angel is absent – or at least, it is for Hyvönen. Part of his rejection of the angel relies on his reading of the Arendtian conviction that beginnings are always possible, hence his claim: 'although we are forced to witness the piling up of debris…we have not lost the capacity to change the world.'[51] Elsewhere his argument hinges on the need to 'restructure collective existence.'[52] In essence, then it is Arendt's twofold political conditions of natality and plurality that, Hyvönen argues, could prove instrumental – without pursuing instrumental ends – to solving the various existential threats brought to light by the crisis.

While the force of Hyvönen's claim is immediate and points to a recovery of those conditions that will be essential to rethinking the political, elsewhere in the article he writes: 'there's little sense in speaking of a singular Anthropocene that has one definition and one origin.'[53] Perhaps more so than his rejection of the angel, it is here that our arguments diverge, because it is precisely through the heralding of a *singular* Anthropocene in possession of *one* historical origin, that I argue plurality and natality come into being as forces capable of reckoning with the violent wreckage of the climate crisis.[54] Pursuing a radically different track to Hyvönen then, my approach to the Anthropocene is

[48] Ibid.
[49] SW4: 390.
[50] Rob Nixon includes a haunting epigraph to his book *Slow Violence: Environmentalism of the Poor,* in which 'Lawrence Summers, then president of the World Bank, advocates that the bank develop a scheme to export rich nation garbage, toxic waste, and heavily polluting industries to Africa' (2018, 1). Regrettably, this serves as just one piece of evidence in the growing economy of waste and destruction that the Anthropocene produces. Elsewhere, evidence can be seen in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, increasing 'wars on waste' and the destruction of homes and buildings in floods, fires, and landslides. See, Boetzkes, 2010; Hird, 2013; Huang, 2017.
[51] Hyvönen, 2020: 260.
[52] Hyvönen, 2020: 259
[53] Hyvönen, 2020: 257
[54] Although the force of this claim appears to contradict previous discussions on the status of the origin in this project, principally in my claims that the origin cannot be reduced to a single moment but must be read within a constellation of temporal relations, I do not think that the insistence on recognising a historical origin in the context of the climate crisis undermines the force of this position. Insofar as the 'origin' of the Anthropocene as I define it here, is itself the product of a system of historical frameworks already in practice and, in turn, continues to belatedly assume meaning in the ongoing unfolding of the climate crisis, it aligns with the irreducible quality of Benjamin's origin as contingent to an enduring stream of becoming.

determined in relation to its capacity to be read as having *one* origin.[55] First identified by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer in 2000, the 'Anthropocene,' marks the geologic shifts inaugurated by human activity.[56] While Crutzen and Stoermer locate the inauguration of these shifts in the year 1800, 'as the moment when methane and CO_2 brewed by the gargantuan machines of the Industrial Revolution began to influence the earth's climate,' a significant tranche of Anthropocene theory now exists challenging this date and arguing for an earlier periodization.[57] And so, making an epochal departure from Crutzen and Stoermer, I follow stratigraphic readings advanced by Mark Maslin and Simon Lewis that locate the Anthropocene in the hulls of transatlantic ships and settler-colonialism, moving back in history by a stretch of over 300 years to the arrival of Columbus into the Americas in 1492.[58] What thus serves as *the* historical origin of the climate crisis is at its very core an affront to Arendt's claim that 'plurality is the law of the earth.'[59]

Where Hyvönen underplays the implications of identifying the moment from which this particular present of the climate crisis unfolds, I remain invested in Arendt's claim that thinking must remain bound to the incidents and events of reality otherwise it 'is liable either to become altogether meaningless or to rehash old verities which have lost all concrete relevance.'[60] In other words, it is the singularity of the Anthropocene's organising event, its beginning in the violence of colonialism and slavery, that must coordinate thinking today, and it is this form of original violence with which climate politics must contend. Implicit here is a move away from trends of 'wilful blindness' that permeate other engagements with the climate crisis, which refuse to acknowledge the violence of

[55] I recognise the complexity of this position and the careful nuance and scientific evidence that it demands. I aim to address these requirements throughout this chapter as I rely on both stratigraphic readings of atmospheric carbon levels and decolonial histories of settler-colonial invasions. My intention is thus not to contest the scientific basis on which Mark Maslin and Simon Lewis found their hypothesis regarding the colonial origins of the Anthropocene but to explore the philosophical implications of their claim.
[56] Crutzen and Stoermer, 2000.
[57] Schlosser, 2020: 3. For an overview of atmospheric carbon levels at the time of colonisation in 1492 and the geological ramifications see, Dull et al, 2010; Lewis and Maslin, 2015; 2018; Nevle and Bird, 2008; Nevle, Bird, Ruddiman and Dull, 2011. For decolonial interpretations of the Anthropocene as it pertains to this particular dating, see Baldwin and Erickson, 2020; Davis and Todd, 2017, Lewis and Maslin, 2015
[58] and Maslin, 2015; 2018.
[59] LMT: 19.
[60] BPF: 6.

ideological conditions that create and dissemble its organising logic.[61] Central to this investment in the concrete is an acknowledgement of the Anthropocene's origin in the colonisation of the so-called 'New World.' For not only did this moment coincide with the arrival of European settlers into the Americas, but it also brought with it the ideological destruction of indigenous livelihoods, implicating the 'New World' in an irreversible and foundational violence. The unfolding violence of the climate crisis is thus staged as a series of ongoing encounters between oppressor and oppressed, coloniser and coloniser, possessor and dispossessed.

Extended rehearsals of the 'origin debate' in the field of Anthropocene studies have complicated what it means to think in terms of 'one definition and one origin.' Beyond the temporal conjectures regarding the origin of the Anthropocene, the limits of what is understood as the 'Anthropocene' continue to be tested as new names countering its apparent anthropocentrism are proposed. Whether it is the so-called *capitalocene* explored by Andreas Malm and Jason Moore to address forces of capital, the *plantationocene* that marks the intersection of dominating land and humans, or Donna Haraway's *chthulucene* which emphasises the interaction of species; each denotes the sentiment of 'entanglement' that Dipesh Chakrabarty deems definitive of this particular 'now of human history.'[62] Identified by Chakrabarty in his own exploration of the Anthropocene's resonance and implications, the invocation of entanglement aims at complicating and deconstructing the same ideological boundedness that gives rise to the specificity these accounts. Rather than revisit the various hypotheses that inform these narratives, I instead follow the stratigraphic readings of earth systems undertaken by Maslin and Lewis. Their contribution to Anthropocene studies moves away from the narratives of industry and technology pervasive of other 'origin stories' – the ones that Moore describes as 'comfortable stories with uncomfortable facts' – Industrial Revolution and Atomic Age being the most notable, to one that is marked by the events of colonialism and slavery.[63]

[61] Yusoff, 2018: 10. Growing appeals to decolonise and indigenise the climate crisis are evidence of attempts to challenge the refusal to recognise the forces that operate within the climate crisis. See: Davis and Todd, 2017; Tuana, 2019; Whyte, 2017; Yusoff, 2018.
[62] See; Chakrabarty, 2009; Haraway, 2015; Malm and Hornborg, 2014; Moore, 2016.
[63] Moore, 2017: 595.

Positing one of the earliest origins to date, Lewis and Maslin locate the origins of this new epoch in 1610, the year in which the consequences of colonisation in the so-called 'New World' appear in stratigraphic record. They describe the methodological process of their work in the following way:

> Defining the beginning of the Anthropocene as a formal geologic unit of time requires the location of a global marker of an event in stratigraphic material, such as rock, sediment, or glacier ice, known as a Global Stratotype Section and Point (GSSP), plus other auxiliary stratigraphic markers indicating changes to the Earth system. Alternatively, after a survey of the stratigraphic evidence, a date can be agreed by committee, known as a Global Standard Stratigraphic Age (GSSA).GSSPs, known as 'golden spikes', are the preferred boundary markers.[64]

The 'golden spike' of 1610 is one with immediate political ramifications, ones from which Maslin and Lewis do not shy away. Renamed the 'Orbis point' in reference to the Latin word for world and the inauguration of a new world-system coordinated by global interconnection, 1610 'implies that colonialism, global trade and coal brought about the Anthropocene.'[65] As if responding to Arendt's recognition that the questions raised by science cannot be answered by scientists alone, Maslin and Lewis acknowledge their hypothesis as 'an act with consequences beyond geology.'[66] It is here that the prescience of Benjamin's critical historiography reveals itself.

Walter Benjamin did not discuss the historical resonance of colonialism, nor did he concern himself with the systemic problems it inaugurated. And yet, bringing him into discussion of the historical structures of colonialism, particularly as it evolves into the normative framework underpinning the climate crisis is a task easily drawn from his writing. Beyond his preoccupation with historical materialism as 'shot through with splinters of messianic time' and so inclined towards the

[64] Lewis and Maslin, 2015: 173.
[65] Lewis and Maslin, 2015: 177.
[66] HC: 3; Lewis and Maslin, 2015: 171.

rupture of historical linearity, it is Benjamin's concern with the violence of the law that indicates his proximity to the question of colonial history.[67] Indeed, the overlap between the law-making violence of settler-colonialism, the 'invasion come to stay,' and the state-sanctioned violence of neo-colonialist law-preservation indicate the aptness of Benjamin's 'Critique of Violence' to the question of colonialism.[68] In turn, the intersection of violence and *History*, insofar as the dispossession of indigenous people occurs both physically and historically – they are present neither in place nor in historical record – points to the force of Benjamin's subsequent critique of history outlined in the previous chapter.[69]

Maslin and Lewis put into relief the lived specificity of those oppressed by the production of the Anthropocene:

> Besides permanently and dramatically altering the diet of almost all of humanity, the arrival of Europeans in the Americas also led to a large decline in human numbers. Regional population estimates sum to a total of 54 million people in the Americas in 1492, with recent population modelling estimates of 61 million people. Numbers rapidly declined to a minimum of about 6 million people by 1650 via exposure to diseases carried by Europeans, plus war, enslavement and famine.[70]

With this account any lingering fears that the term 'Anthropocene' does not account for the power differentials that coordinate the climate crisis are remedied.[71] Given the bodily immediacy of this violence, a rebuttal is made to the supposed abstract class of sexless, genderless 'anthropos,' that might otherwise assume the central role in considerations of the Anthropocene. Produced in the very literal violence of colonisation, these axes of power – and oppression – are exposed, what is thus

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[67] SW4: 397.
[68] Wolfe, 1999**.** For a similar discussion, see also; Sharpe, 2016: 102-108.
[69] The sustained exclusion of indigenous lives from history is evident not least in the limited histories of the Anthropocene or statehood but persists in the literally in the example of missing indigenous women. The *Canadian National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* serves as ongoing testament to this.
[70] Lewis and Maslin, 2015: 175.
[71] See Malm, 2013; Moore 2015; Haraway 2016; Mirzoeff, 2014.

achieved is a qualification of the 'revolutionary fight' in which Benjamin inscribes his historical materialist.[72] Moreover, the 'name' of the law that must be destroyed in this fight assumes form in relation to the practice of settler-colonialism and its dependence on human exploitation.

The centripetal force of this event, which Maslin and Lewis qualify in terms of its ongoing geological power, highlights the law-making function of this moment. Mbembe similarly describes this moment in global history as portending a 'planetarization of the world,' invoking Sylvia Wynter's depiction of 1492 as inaugurating a 'new world view.'[73] Yet even beyond the geographical reverberations of the colonial event, it assumes a status in history that perpetuates the original claim of occupation. David Lloyd describes the relationship between the settler and the original contingency of their arrival in terms of the calcification of a legal framework that echoes Benjamin's extra-legal law-making violence:

> The settler remains perpetually on guard, poised for real and imaginary resistance behind an 'iron wall' whose institutionalisation preserves the attitude of an initial colonising minority within the very structures of the state. Rather than gaining confidence and therefore openness to the potential for change and accommodation as it gains power and security, the settler society undergoes a gradual hardening of its defensive psychic and institutional structures over time. Rather than expanding democratic freedoms and inclusivity, the more it appropriates in the name of security and development, the more deeply it becomes militarised, and the more it shapes draconian laws and restrictions on the rights of the colonised.[74]

Indeed, as the globe is reorganised by the networks of transatlantic trade throughout the sixteenth century, humans uprooted from their claims to place in Africa and transported across the globe in the

[72] SW4: 396.
[73] Wynter, 1995.
[74] Lloyd, 2012: 69. For a similar discussion see Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos on the 'being of the occupier,' (2014).

slave trade, a new rendering of earth-world-history is brought into play, one that inclines towards the ideologically fixed Earth-World-History.

As noted, Sharpe describes centripetal function of violent origins through the image of the slave ship, which leaves a 'wake' in the water, a disturbance that ripples outwards, rewriting the topography of water and implicating others beyond the original scene of violence. Andrew Benjamin similarly reflects on this expansive force in violence, noting that 'violence is not just an individual act. It is worldly in part because while sanctioned by the world that world is configured to deny its victim a place within it. Taken together this is the event of violence.'[75] Maintaining a worldly force then, the violence of the Anthropocene origin incorporates the flows of movement already in existence. For Yusoff, this rewriting of global cartography builds upon the construction of '[b]lackness as a historically constituted and intentionally enacted deformation in the formation of subjectivity, a deformation that presses an inhuman categorization and the inhuman earth into intimacy.'[76] The inhuman proximity, seemingly produced as the marginalia earth-world-history's rewriting under the planetarization of the world, becomes fundamental to the practices of extraction that make colonialism possible. Hence, it is not merely the coincidence of inhumanity in the pursuit of global order by which colonialism emerges but the very incorporation of the former as definitive of what it means both to realise *and* maintain colonialism at a global scale. The object of violence is thus not merely those whose presence marks the counterforce to settler-colonialism, namely the presence of the indigenous, but those who are *already* rendered mute and instrumental to this project.

Beyond the economic 'entanglement' of Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean, and Europe at this time, and here I rely on Chakrabarty's use of the term as invoking a predicament which demands a response from within a plurality, what is equally underway is a momentous shift in the transfer of flora and fauna.[77] As Maslin and Lewis explain what is commonly known as the Colombian Exchange, 'the cross-continental movement of dozens of…food species…domesticated animals… and human commensals (the black rat, to the Americas) plus accidental transfers…contributed to a

[75] Benjamin, 2016: 161.
[76] Yusoff, 2018: 9.
[77] Chakrabarty, 2009.

swift, ongoing, radical reorganization of life on earth without geological precedent.'[78] Indeed it is these two paradigm shifts together, the reshaping of ecosystems and the death of so many indigenous lives, that appear posthumously in stratigraphic record as a *dip* in carbon production. It is this dip to which Maslin and Lewis respond, locating it as the point of departure for the Anthropocene.

Responding to Maslin and Lewis' hypothesis, Heather Davis and Zoe bring into view the corporeal depth of the 'evidence' that supports their claim. Rather than abstract from the deaths of indigenous Americans and the theft of Africans, they speak in terms of the 'fleshy philosophies and fleshy bodies [as] precisely the stakes of the Anthropocene.'[79] Nancy Tuana echoes this point, describing 'the circulations of race in the Anthropocene [as having] fleshly lives and lineages.'[80]As these bodies assume presence in the perversion of the oneness of earth-world-history, they echo the discussion of the death camp from earlier chapters. Whilst I will not claim that the uprootedness that preceded totalitarianism and that ongoing uprooting that is sustained in the violence of the climate crisis are the same, it is worth noting that each operate to subvert the basis of rights at the same time that claims to place are rendered mute. Where totalitarianism uprooted its victims from their place within the world, imposing a 'placeless' status that coincided with the loss of rights, colonialism exercises its power as a similar negation of place.[81] Echoing this point, when Giorgio Agamben imagines arrivals at concentration camps, he enjoins an account of the subject who, robbed of the story of their worldly being, of an identity that is based 'in' history, is reduced to mere matter. He thus writes that, 'if one was a Jew in Auschwitz or a Bosnian woman in Omarska, one entered the camp as a result not of political choice but rather of what was most private and incommunicable in oneself, that is, one's blood, one's biological body. But precisely the latter functions now as a decisive political criterion.'[82] I invoke this moment, of the camp inhabitant's loss of history and their reduction

[78] Maslin and Lewis, 2015: 174.
[79] Davis and Todd, 2016: 767.
[80] Tuana, 2019: 11.
[81] In a way what I am pushing against here are claims that the European Holocaust 'targeted humans alone.' Returning to my claim that to be human is to be in place in the constellation earth-world-history, to target humans in their abstract specificity implies a challenge to their being-in-place. Although I don't want to collapse the distinction between the invasion and occupation that is settler-colonialism and the ghettoization of communities during totalitarianism, I do want to complicate the implication of 'placelessness' in the idea of 'humans alone.' See Estes, 2019, 89-90, TallBear, 2016.
[82] Agamben, 2000: 122.

to a life denied earthly purpose and hence the potential to enter into the constellation of earth-world-history as the locus proper to their being, to demonstrate an overlap between the common modes through which genocide – racial or colonial – operate.

While a clear resonance can be felt here with Agamben's examination of the *homo sacer*, rather than advance Agamben's largely disembodied account of the subject upon whom violence is perpetrated with impunity, I turn to other invocations of it, highlighting its corporeal specificity. [83] In 'Refusing Blackness-as-Victimization: Trayvon Martin and the Black Cyborgs' Joy James and João Costa Vargas provide an example of the *homo sacer* in situ. They write:

> What happens when instead of becoming enraged and shocked every time a Black person is killed in the United States, we recognize Black death as a predictable and constitutive aspect of this democracy? What will happen then if instead of demanding justice we recognize (or at least consider) that the very notion of justice . . . produces and requires Black exclusion and death as normative.[84]

Denise Ferreira da Silva similarly resists falling into the logic of Agamben's *homo sacer* to exemplify the violence to which racialised bodies are exposed, particularly in the context of murder by police. Here she describes the ethico-juridical entity that is the murdered Black body as 'an effect of the very grammar that governs modern ethical and juridical texts, which guides legal decisions, the framing and function of legal institutions, as well as critical legal thought.'[85] Sharpe further compounds this, drawing us back to the language of earth-world-history, proclaiming the state-sanctioned legal and extra-legal murders of Black people in the USA (although we see this beyond national borders and attaining particular extremity in the 'slow violence' of the climate crisis) as 'the ground we walk

[83] Agamben, 1998. Rather than persist with the abstract identity of Agamben's *homo sacer,* part of my project of critical history relies on giving space to those rendered exilic by *History.* While I cannot assume to speak for nor name those exiled by the organising events of the Anthropocene, I want to try and think in dialogue with their 'afterlives' and those who continued to be persecuted in their place.
[84] James and Vargas, 2012: 193.
[85] Ferreira da Silva, 2017: 276.

on.'[86] The claims at play here bring us back to Benjamin's law-making violence as the coincidence of legality, extra-legality and the construction of race.

Yusoff goes further still in her reading of race and the fracturing of placedness that it names, arguing that 'the racial categorization of Blackness shares its natality with mining the New World, as does the material impetus for colonialism in the first instance.' Radically inverting the expansive opening that natality signals in the writing of Arendt, here 'natality' emerges as the foreclosure of Arendt's original politics of plurality and spontaneity. Yusoff goes onto connect the idea of Blackness with the 'displacement and eradication of indigenous peoples [who] get caught and are defined in the ontological wake of geology.'[87] Borrowing from Sharpe's political lexicon, Yusoff's allusion to 'wakes' highlights the normative force of colonial *History*, or, as I would want to understand it here, the collapse of earth-world-history. The calcification of claims to place under colonialism, which recalls not only the dispossession of indigenous peoples but, as Yusoff demonstrates the construction of race more generally, coincides with the undoing of earth-world-history as a space of original agonism. Yusoff puts this in terms drawn seamlessly from the constellation:

> The human and its subcategory, the inhuman, are historically relational to a discourse of settler-colonial rights and the material practices of extraction, which is to say that the categorization of matter is a spatial execution, of place, land, and person cut from relation through geographic displacement (and relocation through forced settlement and transatlantic slavery).[88]

This displacement operates not least in the context of geography and hence a form of spatial displacement but within the context of time, appearing here as a way of negating the originality of natality as a disruptive yet placed event (both in time and space). Where Arendt gives an account of natality as creating 'the condition for remembrance, that is, for history,' what depictions of history

[86] Sharpe, 2016: 7. In *Lose Your Mother* (2007) Hartman makes direct reference to the notion of bare life as she discusses the valence of 'staying' in the afterlife of slavery. See, 2007: 86-88.
[87] Yusoff, 2018: 2.
[88] Yusoff, 2018: 13-4.

like this make clear is the complete erasure of natality as a realisable faculty and hence the exilic force that operates within earth-world-history.[89]

Beyond its original fracturing of place and claims to be-in-place, processes of colonialism demonstrate the intrinsic violence that is the inability *to be* in any properly human sense. That is to say, without the ability to fulfil the potential inscribed within the project of being-in-place in earth-world-history what is lost is the very meaning of being. This point was articulated in the previous chapter in reference to Arendt's claim that a life without speech is literally dead to the world, incapable of fulfilling the earthly purpose of being within the complex matrix of earth-world-history.[90] When Arendt describes the status of the slave in this regard as '*aneu logon,* deprived, of course, not of the faculty of speech, but of a way of life in which speech and only speech made sense,' she recalls this point and gestures towards the original violence that is the construction of a life marked by its inability to be heard.[91] Hartman elicits a similar reading of slavery when she describes the violence witnessed by Frederick Douglas of his Aunt Hester's beating. Accounting for 'one of the most well-known scenes of torture in the literature of slavery,' Hartman describes the way in which Douglas 'establishes the centrality of violence to the making of the slave and identifies it as an original generative act equivalent to the statement 'I am born.''[92] Even beyond this original violence it is Douglas' inability to locate his birth in history that betrays the exilic condition of slavery. Held within Douglas' admission, 'I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record of it…I was not allowed to make any inquiries of my master concerning it. He deemed all such inquiries on the part of a slave improper and impertinent, and evidence of a restless spirit,' is a threshold imposed over who or what is permitted to contribute to 'history.'[93]

Where Mbembe describes this form of the slave's exile beyond history by their oppressor as a condemnation to live and denial of recognition as co-human, he maintains that the slave 'nevertheless remained [an] active subject.'[94] Throughout this experience the work of production continued and

[89] HC: 9.
[90] HC: 176.
[91] HC: 27.
[92] Hartman, 1997: 3.
[93] Hartman, 1999: 1-2.
[94] CBR: 2.

Douglas 'never stopped desiring freedom.'[95] Drawing on this life-giving desire, Douglas thus maintained a claim to the anarchic potential to begin.[96] Hence, although Douglas exists beyond the violence of *History*, his exclusion from *History* signals its refusal to admit impartiality. It is precisely the violence of this exclusion, the insistence on Douglas' relegation to the peripheral 'non-*History'* that points to 'something rotten in the law' of *History*.[97] Baldwin makes a similar argument when he describes the way in which the violent denial of historical impartiality undermines *History's* claim to integrity. Hence, when he writes that 'in the case of the Negro the past was taken from him whether he wanted to or no,' the effects of this theft and historical exile rebound of the oppressor.[98] Hence, he observes, 'our dehumanization of the Negro then is indivisible from our dehumanization of ourselves: the loss of our own identity is the price we pay for our annulment of his.'[99]

In a later text on the histories of black women, Hartman speaks to a shared exclusion from the normative force of *History*. In reference to these women, whose narratives are 'written from nowhere, from the nowhere of the ghetto and the nowhere of utopia,' Hartman locates a spatial void which, in parallel to Douglas' temporal exclusion, reveals the exilic presence to which the oppressed speak.[100] Positioned both inside and outside the structural normativity of society, the enslaved and the colonised emerge as the historically – and racially – specific condition of Agamben's exposed *homo sacer.* Naming them in this way concretizes the law that Benjamin's later account of divine or anarchic violence will seek to destroy. Moreover, insofar as we remain with this body in its construction as 'other,' in its being raced, a mode of resistance is then enacted against the violence that would otherwise render it mute and exiled from the constellation earth-world-history. The processes of erasure that Davis and Todd locate in settler-colonialism, as erasing both earth and world show how the lives of indigenous peoples were deemed external to the constellation earth-world-

[95] Goldberg, 2018: 212.
[96] Mbembe concludes *Critique of Black Reason* with a discussion of the 'desire for life' as a resource for the redemption of politics and culture. This coincidence of desire with a life-giving potential will form a central part to the conclusion of Chapter Six where I read it in tandem with Arendt's 'life-giving oases' of love and friendship. See PP: 201-205.
[97] SW1: 242.
[98] Baldwin, 2017: 30.
[99] Baldwin, 2017: 26.
[100] Hartman, 2019: xiii.

history. Davis and Todd are thus led to an account of the Anthropocene in terms of a 'severing of relations between humans and the soil.'[101] Elsewhere, Eyal Weizman shows the equivalence with which 'native people, who were seen as part of the natural environment, were displaced along with the climate or killed.'[102]

In the context of the Anthropocene, this amounts to the fracturing of its claim to historical impartiality. Indeed, it is precisely this loss of historical impartiality that realises what Yusoff calls 'white geology,' the racialised practice of scientific reasoning.[103] The synchronicity with which land is colonised, humans entered into slavery, and race constructed coalesce as the febrile ground from which the seeds of the climate crisis are sown. Or, as Ghassan Hage surmises, the 'practice of racial and ecological domination have the same roots.'[104] Looking now to the preservation of these processes, I turn to the centripetal effects of this moment, thinking alternately in terms of Benjamin's law-preserving violence and the climate crisis.

5.3 Preserving Violence: In the Wake of *History's* Exile

If, as Benjamin tells us, 'origins are eddies in the stream of becoming,' the particular origin of the Anthropocene forms part of the insidious invasion of colonialism into the structural framing of modern history and reality. What occurs here is then not only an act of violence but the realisation of violence as law that will that persist in diminishing the earthly potential of the racialised other as they are drawn into 'scenes of subjection.'[105] Arendt was well aware of the foundation of modern America on this divisive construction. Rather than recognising this violence as exerting a structural force, however, Arendt focused on the establishment of American independence from the ruling British. Unfortunately, this renders her celebration of the 'spirit of the laws' inaugurated at this moment complicit with the affirmation of a particularly sinister and violent law-making violence. Unable to grasp the meaning of settler-colonialism Arendt was incapable of seeing the violence that would serve

[101] Davis and Todd, 2015: 770.
[102] Weizman, 2015: 36.
[103] Yusoff, 2018.
[104] Hage, 2017: ix.
[105] Hartman, 1997.

as the ground of the nation she esteemed so highly. Her essays on civil disobedience display particularly uncomfortable evidence of this; she writes: 'the reason [Tocqueville] could predict the future of Negroes and Indians for more than a century ahead lay in the simple and frightening fact that these people had never been included in the original consensus universalis of the American republic.'[106] Ayça Çubukçu makes the violence of Arendt's reading explicit: 'not only were African Americans and Native Americans excluded from the original consensus universalis, arguably, their enslavement, slaughter, and dispossession through violent acts of settler colonialism were constitutive of the revolutionary republic that Arendt so praised.'[107] Arendt's failures to critically engage, and to assume her own injunction to think, are disappointing, since they suggest an image of Arendt at odds with her *praxis* of expansive politics and embrace of worldly being.[108]

In stark contrast to Arendt, Martin Luther King's words speak truth to the spirit of laws that emerged as foundational to the United States. Instead of Arendt's reflections then, which lend themselves more readily to a defence of the US police service which emerged out of the need to protect and enforce slavery and colonialism, King's words provide proof that Benjamin's 'flash' of *Historical* oppression has been recognised:

> Our nation was born in genocide when it embraced the doctrine that the original American, the Indian, was an inferior race. Even before there were large numbers of Negroes on our shores, the scar of racial hatred had already disfigured colonial society. From the sixteenth century forward, blood flowed in battles of racial supremacy. We are perhaps the only nation which tried as a matter of national policy to wipe out its indigenous population. Moreover, we elevated that tragic experience into a noble crusade. Indeed, even today we have not permitted ourselves to reject or to feel remorse for this shameful episode. Our literature, our films, our drama, our folklore all exalt it.[109]

[106] Arendt, 1970: 90.
[107] Çubukçu, 2021, 42.
[108] For a critical review of Arendt and race, see: Belle, 2014.
[109] King, 1963: 33. Regrettably, the United States is not the only nation whose foundation was premised on the attempt to 'wipe out its indigenous population.' On the genealogy of the US police service and its relationship to slavery and indigeneity see, Bass, 2001; Vitale, 2017.

The immanent connection between violence and place, as the destruction of communities coincides with the desecration of land, recalls the implication of colonialism with the wholeness of earth-world-history. The normative force of racist doctrines such as colonialism assume presence not only as they render the topography of the environment anew but as they force out the relational worldliness of indigenous people and the historical claim to appearance of those who, like slaves, are forced into this new iteration of place.

What occurs beyond the immediate spaces of oppression is the simultaneous failure to develop a meaningful ontology of being on the behalf of the occupier. The scene of violence thus incorporates both oppressor and oppressed. Hence, as 'the Atlantic gradually became the epicentre of a new concatenation of worlds, the locus of a new planetary consciousness,' it incorporated a perversion of earth-world-history.[110] Baldwin makes precisely the same point when he writes that 'all of the Western nations have been caught in a lie, the lie of their pretended humanism; this means that their history has no moral justification, and that the West has no moral authority.'[111] Forgoing the fullness of history what is rendered immoral is the pretence of *History's* claim to humanism. Dissembling the agonism that unfolds in acts of original relation with that constellation, earth-world-history becomes a source of exile (Earth-World-History). Disfigured by force and recast as an iteration of fixed ontological specificity, *the* Earth-World-History of colonial logic, for instance, a normalization of exclusion, the perpetual exile of slaves and indigenous people from their homes, become the basis of its expansion. While Arendt's fears for loneliness and worldly alienation strike a chord here, as does Heidegger's emphasis on the homeless status of human beings, by remaining with the structurally violent dimension of this account of earth-world-history in the Anthropocene, I hope to highlight the Benjaminian dimension of this history.[112]

Davis and Todd describe Kyle Whyte, of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, as providing an account of the Anthropocene in which it is exposed as 'the deliberate enactment of colonial processes that refuse to acknowledge specific and locational relations between humans, the land, and our other

[110] CBR: 13.
[111] Baldwin, 1972: 85.
[112] See HC: 248-257. On totalitarianism and loneliness, see Danoff, 2000; Gaffney, 2016; Schaap, 2020; Topolski, 2015: 51-56.

kin.'[113] Connecting this interpretation of the Anthropocene to the messianic force of Benjamin's historical 'flash' allows for a rethinking of that original refusal. As Whyte himself writes, 'industrial settler campaigns erase what makes a place ecologically unique in terms of human and nonhuman relations, the ecological history of a place, and the sharing of the environment by different human societies.'[114] Robbed of specificity and radically undermined as a locus of original relationality, the space that Whyte describes diverges from the matrix of irreducible forces that coalesce as the constellation earth-world-history. What transpires instead is the calcification of space and the normalization of something like a lack in relation to the original claim to be-in-place. The insidious erasure of that constellation that informs the ontological weight of being-in-place establishes a sense of 'present absence.' The constitutive violence of colonialism premised insofar as it is premised on the negation of the indigeneity creates this paradoxical space in which the law of colonial presence is inextricable from the exclusion of the indigenous body.

David Lloyd describes the condition of absent presence in terms through which the exilic condition of the climate crisis can be interpolated, hence:

> This peculiar condition of being absent even when all too present, or of presence manifest in absence, of being outside even when all too much inside, however metaphysical it may appear, is one that both follows the spatial logic of ethnic cleansing and occupation as material phenomena and conforms to the logical space of the exception, that space where the constitutive force of law or state is manifested in its suspension.[115]

The spatial logic of this violence inheres in the preservation of Benjamin's law-making violence which assumes an omnipotent presence as the dissembling of earth-world-history as a locus of original ontological antagonism. What instead becomes pervasive within the sense of place described by Lloyd and Said is the liminal threshold of exile. Namely, that the anarchic law of this constellation

[113] Davis and Todd, 2016: 771.
[114] Whyte, 2016: 8.
[115] Ibid.

is precisely not something akin plurality, but instead the prescription of certain forms of legality. In 'On the Concept of History,' the hegemonic presence of this framework emerges in the operation of historical conformism.[116]

The insidiousness of exile, which persists as the negation of the place necessary for the formation of world and history, in other words, the negation of the claim to exercise the ontological potential inscribed in earth-world-history assumes a conditioning presence when it assumes what Benjamin refers to in the context of law-preserving violence, a 'threatening violence.'[117] What distinguishes Benjamin's presentation of law-preserving violence in terms of the threat recurs in Foucault's depiction of the panopticon where the constant possibility of being watched figures an instance of imminent violence.[118] In the 'Critique on Violence' Benjamin develops this through the distinction of threats in relation to objects of deterrence.

> And its threat is not intended as the deterrent that uninformed liberal theorists interpret it to be. A deterrent in the exact sense would require a certainty that contradicts the nature of a threat and is not attained by any law, since there is always hope of eluding its arm. This makes it all the more threatening, like fate, which determines whether the criminal is apprehended.[119]

As the threat assumes a normative status in the structural formation of society it exercises a claim over the capacity of certain individuals to incorporate themselves within a plurality. Suspended outside of the social framework of earth-world-history as the locus of action, what is gradually eroded is the valence of place as the ground that precedes action. What Arendt will refer to in terms of uprootedness or alienation and Heidegger in terms of a pervasive homelessness is remedied by the unqualifiable claim to place that each individual maintains.[120] Namely, that insofar as a person is, they

[116] SW4: 391.
[117] SW1: 242.
[118] Foucault, 1995.
[119] SW1: 242.
[120] Arendt discusses world alienation in the latter half of *The Human Condition* (248-266), references to the experience of being uprooted appear throughout her writings on the topics of loneliness, politics, and refugees.

are in place. Arendt puts this bluntly when she writes that the 'earth is the quintessence of the human condition,' or that wherever people go they may form a *polis* or political community.[121] In other words, insofar as being in place coincides with being, the possibility to reject the dispossessing exilic structures of *History* through an anarchic claim to place is possible. I will return to this potential in the concluding section.

While the 'law' in Benjamin's 'Critique of Violence' is not reducible to legality, its preservation is perhaps most clearly attested to in the structures of state-sanctioned violence. Sharpe explores the endurance of this violence within the context of systemic of racism, which straddles the division between legality and extra-legality. She writes:

> the condition in the post–Civil War United States of the formerly enslaved and their descendants; still on the plantation, still surrounded by those who claimed ownership over them and who fought, and fight still, to extend that state of capture and subjection in as many legal and extralegal ways as possible, into the present. The means and modes of Black subjection may have changed, but the fact and structure of that subjection remain.[122]

In another section of this same text, Sharpe describes the 'gratuitous violence that occurs at the level of a structure that constitutes the Black as the constitutive outside.'[123] Benjamin's critique of historical conformism can be found in these words, as violence assumes a structural force and draws the present into a reality steeped in the exclusionary logic of the past. Claiming a similar proximity to Sharpe's word is Nixon's account of 'slow attritional violence.'[124] Dispersed across time and space, slow violence forms in inverted parallel with the exilic subject, as one pervades *History* the other is removed. Competing to occupy place within that same matrix of earth-world-history, the victim of

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Heidegger's discussion of homelessness is similarly woven throughout his writing. It appears firstly in the context of *Dasein* in *Being and Time* as a way of describing the anxiety or inescapable existential condition of life (BT: 188-189). It attains to a singular clarity in discussions of the inauthenticity of dwelling in his post-war writings, see PLT: 158-159.

[121] HC: 2;199.

[122] Sharpe, 2016: 12.

[123] Sharpe, 2016: 28.

[124] Nixon, 2018: 2.

slow violence is erased from presence. This erasure assumes a critical poignancy in the climate crisis in the example of small island nations, whose claim-to-placedness is literally denied by rising sea-levels. Having named the law that is preserved as the violence of the climate crisis, namely the *History* of settler-colonialism, I conclude by exploring the conditions for Benjamin's destruction of the law in divine violence.

5.4 Divine Violence: Destruction of *History's* Law

Recalling Hyvönen's twofold appeal for a 'collective existence' and renewed faith in the human 'capacity to change the world' from the introduction to this chapter, I conclude by returning to these ideas. What emerges in equal force at this junction is the provocation from Hartman that served as an epigraph to this chapter; namely, when is it time to dream?[125] Charging this question is the ineliminability of the climate crisis, the irreversible fact of its presence and the necessity to think place as always now determined by that condition. Developing a divine or messianic destruction of the law that is *History* thus becomes a project prefaced by the recognition of exactly this ineliminable irreversibility. Recreating the tropes of Benjamin's intersecting historical generations, perhaps most of all in the language of generations whose coming was expected and on whose appearance the past has a claim, I rely here on Sharpe's 'wake work' which operates in the overlap between past and present, mapping 'the ways that the past haunts the present.'[126]

Serving as a critical point of departure for Sharpe is Saidiya Hartman's identification of the present as the 'after-live of slavery' in which 'lives are still imperilled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched years ago.'[127] Sharpe describes her incorporation of Hartman's imagery in own development of 'a black studies in the wake [which] would inhabit this knowledge [of after-life] as the ground from which we theorize.'[128] Putting into abeyance the ground of the *homo sacer,* which *History* posits as normative, Sharpe and Hartman recentre the *Historical* periphery. Where Sharpe and Hartman's work becomes particularly apposite to

[125] Hartman, 2007: 100.
[126] Sharpe, 2014: 60.
[127] Hartman, 2007: 6.
[128] Sharpe, 2014: 60.

the task at hand is in the critical light into which it brings the racialised origins of the Orbis point of the Anthropocene. Less an abstract historical moment, Maslin and Lewis' hypothesis reveals the stubborn intersection of earth, world, and history and the necessity to rethink the violent origin of the present. Once again then, the convergence with Benjamin is apparent. If the origin of the climate crisis lies within the law-making violence of colonisation and maintains presence through the law-preserving violence of neo-colonial practices, the divine violence that would disrupt this claim to normative order would be the messianic intervention into history that exposes the present as 'in the wake.'

In the previous two sections, I have sought to think in the presence of the exilic subjects of the climate crisis. Reappearing in Kathryn Yusoff's writing as history's 'voidings,' both the 'voided' and the exiled serve as a rejoinder to the limited perspective of *History's* 'we.' It is this 'we' that assumes presence as the narrator of *History*. Moreover, it is the preservation of exile as a form of domination, a continuation into the present that is apparent in Yusoff's use of the present continuous void*ings* that serves as an imperative to counter the normalisation of this exclusionary violence. When Yusoff thus challenges the 'we' of history she begins the task of resistance that aligns with anarchic, law-destroying violence in order to confront the apparent givenness of the present. Unable to answer the question, 'who are you who writes history,' Yusoff calls upon a plurality of historians, whose experiences give texture to the unfolding constellation of earth-world-history so under threat by the homogenising force of the Anthropocene's *History*. Picking up on the language of *History's* exilic force, Yusoff's appeal might be read as calling on *historians,* the practitioners of *Historical* resistance. It is precisely this task, one that notes the distinction of the *Historian* and *historian* that Australian scholar Jane Haggis evinces, responding to her own encounter with Australian colonial *History,* from a position that '[refuses] 'Historian' and [claims], perhaps 'historian,' writing always from the particularity of some one's history, a history never external to the narrator or the narrated.'[129] Haggis sees within such a history (*history*) an 'ethics of entanglement: of partiality and incompleteness,' marking the proximity of her historiography to the redeemed 'voidings' of Yusoff

[129] Haggis, 2014: 168.

and to the relational inclinations of Adriana Cavarero's that intercut through natality's vulnerable and plural generations.

Like Haggis, whose rejection of *History's* violence of exclusion entails the acknowledgement of 'the partial situatedness of [white Australia's] knowledge making and its products,' Yusoff orients away from the false claim to historical completeness by bringing into presence those rendered, as Benjamin so calls them, *History's* 'detritus.'[130] What thus appear as Yusoff's 'voidings' constitute both a form of anarchic historicism that reorients the linearity of history away from the normative claim to violent conformism towards what Yusoff calls an 'altered thinking' of the present or what Sharpe understands as 'wake work.' Recovering the messianic force of natality from the previous chapter, in this concluding section I demonstrate the anarchic potential of this altered historical thinking to destroy the violence of *History*. Hence, it is here that I enact the Baldwinian sentiment that 'we *are* our history' and have a responsibility for the manner in which we appear.

In his recent monograph, Joel Alden Schlosser highlights the need for a complex historiography of the Anthropocene. Much like Yusoff, he appeals for a complication of precisely that homogenous claim to the plural 'we.' Speaking to Yusoff's project then, he describes the fallibility of *History's* 'we,' noting that 'often "we" excludes many of those most affected by the centuries of exploitation and domination that have culminated in the present climate crisis.'[131] He goes onto to say that while the Anthropocene involves all of 'us,' exactly who comprises that 'us' is rarely interrogated or brought into the necessary dialogues that take place regarding the Anthropocene. If the trouble with *History's* 'we' is its liminal claim to participation and the qualifications implicit in its structure, one resolution would seem to exist in those 'voidings.' And yet, part of what makes the project of historical impartiality so problematic is the tropes of exploitation that pervade both the production of voids and the subsequent redemption of voids in the service of reconciliation. In other words, the exilic condition of *History* cannot be destroyed simply by inverting the status of the so-called detritus that underpins it.

[130] Haggis, 2004: 8.
[131] Schlosser, 2020: 17. `

Recognising *History* as their oppressor, those deemed exilic to the constellation of earth-world-history resist by claiming presence, not merely in place but in history as well. That is to say, in opposition to the silence of brute violence, the exiled persist in courage and humour to sing in the face of oppression and claim space within the construction of history.[132] In the context of the battle at Standing Rock, for instance, Nick Estes describes the communities as coming together in what was as 'a struggle over ancestral lands wrongly stolen through violence and guile.'[133] Emphatically, it is about 'more than stopping a pipeline.'[134] These acts of environmental resistance emerge as central to the laying bare of those structures of *History*. What is thus exposed is the extent to which this, and other instances of environmental destruction, are never simply acts against land but always already acts against indigenous peoples and in that way, premised upon the exposure of these bodies to that violence. Caught alongside the violence of indigenous claims to presence is the simultaneous treatment of Black bodies positioned as instrumental to these processes of extraction. As these plural forces of violence coalesce, they reveal environmental destruction and minority oppression as two sides of the same coin. Inés Valdez gives a description of these moments as disruptive 'because they counter historical accounts of progress that obfuscate knowledge' – 'that knowledge' being the ontological openings occurring in the wake of *History's* earth-world-history.[135] Operative in these exilic spaces is Benjamin's political impulse: 'to expose the wreckage of history, to stay with it to make whole what has been destroyed and awaken the dead.'[136] Awakening the dead thus becomes the guiding injunction that will serve as resistance to the linear force of *History's* violence. And yet, it is clear that to approach the dead in this way, in the service of redemption, would recreate the systems of violence organised by the logic of means and ends against which this resistance pits itself. The paradox of Benjamin's turn to history thus lies in the inability to reappropriate the dead and the oppressed as means in order to overcome *History*.

[132] It is worth noting that Arendt positioned violence as always mute, unable to speak and enrich the plurality of the world, see; HC, 26; Arendt, 1972**.**
[133] Curley, 2019.
[134] Estes, 2019: 2.
[135] Valdez, 2020: 101.
[136] Ibid.

Luis Guzmàn provides one of the clearest articulations of the paradox of violence that Benjamin works through via the concept divine violence. He describes this initially as follows:

> If one believes that violence is necessary to overcome certain situations of oppression and injustice on Earth, and yet that it is never justifiable (since as a means to an end its justification is dependent on a specific end that cannot avoid, to preserve itself, reproducing the conditions that were to be eliminated), then one finds oneself in a paradox.[137]

In the context at hand this translates to the paradox of recreating the oppressed in a new class of instrumentality, re-perpetuating claims to bodily ownership where the objective aim is the supposed redemption from oppressive servitude. In other words, redemption from the *History* of colonialism and its preservation in the normativity of settler-colonialism cannot be attained via the appropriation of *History's* oppressed as handmaiden. As Guzmàn puts it, the main trait of divine violence 'is that it is not a means to an end; it is not exercised "to."'[138] What this means in relation to the Anthropocene is a complication of what it means to decolonise a normativity that operates not only at the level of *Historical* violence but extends to consume the entirety of the planet. The singular need for divine intervention in this context thus departs both from the need to break the hold of settler-colonial law whilst also recognising that this law has an irreversible claim over earth-world-history: we cannot not live in the time of the Anthropocene, even where that Anthropocene diverges from its inaugural foundation in violence.

Another paradox emerges in the context of the divine violence sought in relation to the normative violence of the Anthropocene. The law cannot be destroyed as the empirical condition for living. The Anthropocene may be decolonised, critical histories retold against the force of *History*, the exilic condition of the dead redeemed, and the violence of its preservation remedied, but the empirical fact of its presence will persist. Decolonising the Anthropocene will not destroy the climate crisis, nor will it reverse it. And yet, that does not mean that the need to decolonise the Anthropocene

[137] Guzmàn, 2014: 50.
[138] Guzmàn, 2014: 51.

disappears. It remains incumbent upon the historical present to reorient its relationship with the past and assume an understanding of being in the present that takes the fact of the Anthropocene as its necessary point of departure without succumbing to the logic that once organised its appearance. Out of Standing Rock, Estes tells us that 'there is no separation between past and present, meaning that an alternative future is also determined by our understanding of the past. *Our history is the future.'*[139] Davis and Todd provide their own vision of what decolonising the Anthropocene would look like:

> We hope to have shown that by dating the Anthropocene to colonialism we can at least begin to address the root of the problem, which is the severing of relations through the brutality of colonialism coupled with an imperial, universal logic. Through this, we might then begin to address not only the immediate problems associated with massive reliance upon fossil fuel and the nuclear industry, but the deeper questions of the need to acknowledge our embedded and embodied relations with our other than-human kin and the land itself. This necessarily means re-evaluating not just our energy use, but our modes of governance, ongoing racial injustice, and our understandings of ourselves as human.[140]

Is this what Benjamin evinced in his project of divine violence? Does the naming of the law that violence preserves achieve the destructive force of divine violence? Moreover, does the acknowledgement of relationality signal the anarchic beginning of which divine violence is capable? Answering these questions is made possible via a return to Guzmàn.

Guzmàn denotes four qualities of divine violence: 'the possibility of its occurrence, the impossibility of its recognition as such by humankind, the lack of urgency for of said recognition, and the invisibility of its expiatory power.'[141] Drawn from three dense sentences in the last paragraph of the 'Critique of Violence', Guzmàn dedicates the bulk of his exegesis to working through the meaning of these qualities. The first, the innate potentiality of divine violence, echoes Massimiliano Tomba's

[139] Estes, 2019: 14-5, emphasis added.
[140] Davis and Todd, 2017: 775.
[141] Guzmàn, 2014: 51.

temporal reading of divine violence; namely, that it occurs in a moment of suspension, as a rupture from a given temporal order. This is what is exposed as necessary in the normative temporality of the climate crisis, where it follows the linear march of *History* and imposes an exilic logic on the unfolding of time, a divine intervention of this would reorient and impose a rupture. Where Tomba sees this suspension as 'a matter of *ethics,*' Guzmàn gives a reading that positions this suspension as contingent to the realisation of justice.[142] On this he writes:

> Why can't it be fulfilled or actualised? Because it would cease being justice or divine violence. It would fall into the field of instrumentality, into an economy of means-end, sucked into the cycle of mythical violence. A violence that destroys law to found a new law on its ruins falls into the orbit of the cycle of mythical violence. It would need to justify itself, thereby exemplifying once again the "problematic nature of law."[143]

In other words, divine violence resists being caught in the snares of fulfilment which would amount to the perversion of its inclination towards justice. In the context of the climate crisis, divine violence must resist the instrumentalization of oppression and the subsumption of experience into a means-end paradigm. Which is merely to say that something like climate justice defies fulfilment insofar as it remains a question of agonistic renewal. Located within the constellation of earth-world-history and the problematic of relational ontology, the object of judgment's consideration constantly renews, exposing the task of attaining judgment as infinitely demanded.

This leads onto Guzmàn's second quality: 'the impossibility of divine violence's recognition as such by humankind.' Rather than obfuscate what it means to act in terms of divine violence, this quality reinforces the temporal 'not-yet' of divine violence's relation to judgment. The further specification that it is humankind who remain incapable of recognising divine violence when it occurs reinforces its inscription within the agonistic constellation earth-world-history. Put otherwise, this might be better understood in terms of the plural forces that coalesce in the appearance of worldly

[142] Tomba, 2017: 579.
[143] Guzmàn, 2014: 53.

reality. Simply because divine violence and the destruction of the law is not recognisable by humankind, it doesn't follow that this has not occurred. Guzmàn extrapolates this further in the account he provides regarding divine violence's third dimension: the lack of urgency for said recognition. Echoing the perpetual possibility of the law's destruction, Guzmàn explains the lack of urgency in terms that parallel the temporal delay of divine violence. Mirroring Arendt's own description of natality which only assumes its status as spontaneous rupture belatedly, divine violence lacks the transparent urgency that would make it immediately comprehensible. Indeed, such an immediacy would fall back into the means-ends orientation of instrumental or law-preserving violence. Anarchic beginnings such as those attested to by natality, messianism, and divine violence defy presence, they persist retrospectively – although upon recognition they fall into the trap of law-making violence – or as something to be anticipated. In both instances, what is clear however, is that divine violence suspends the unfolding march of time, it subverts the course of *History* and enjoins *historical* presence.

The final of the four qualities, the invisibility of divine violence's expiatory powers, reaffirms the intersection of the preceding three qualities. Yet, here this invisibility in relation to the expiatory force of divine violence reaffirms the expansive and anarchic project of divine violence in relation to judgment. Namely, that while divine violence is motived by the pursuit of justice, it does not impose a liminal threshold on what this would constitute. Guzmàn's account of this is particularly moving and clarifies the problematic of responding to the climate crisis:

> We can catch a glimpse of divine violence: it is fulfilled, in its appearance as mere possibility, say, at the beginning of a revolution. It is actualised *as* ideal, *as* possibility, lying like a shadow just beyond our reach. Its value lies in how it feeds the desire and impulse for transforming the current world-historical conditions of existence into a more just and equal society. It takes place not in the bloody, physical manifestation of mythical violence exercised

> at particular historical junctures, but in the purity of the thirst for justice that leads humans to attempt to change their conditions.[144]

Played out in the context of the climate crisis, each affirmation of land rights or indigenous sovereignty, each piece of wake work or altered thinking of the past, reveals itself as an appearance of divine violence, insofar as each of these instances brings the normative order of *History* into question. It is this thirst for justice that is heard in the battle cries of those fighting the development of the Dakota Access pipeline. Of course, that divine violence is actualised *as* ideal and *as* possibility does not mean that these demands for justice can be dismissed, their negation somehow registered as equal to their status 'just beyond our reach.'

Divine violence appears in the fight against the exilic condition of the climate crisis as the persistent claim to be-in-place, the claims of those denied presence in earth-world-history which, given its internal antagonism, remains an unrelenting task. Insofar as every claim to dwell in place, recalling the Heideggerian term from Chapter One for the activity proper to the oneness of earth-world-history, is a *claim* to dwell, an assertion of presence, every reaffirmation of that constellation can be thought in terms of the divine and anarchic beginning of being-in-place.[145] This much is clear via a clarification of action that borrows from the messianic tropes of natality, every action 'into' the world reorients the conditions for what it means to dwell. Rather than conform the normative order of these conditions, as in the overwhelming normative claim of settler-colonialism *History*, dwelling in earth-world-history is a mode of resistance.

Speaking to her responsibility as an 'historian of the multitude,' Saidiya Hartman describes the way in which she is 'forced to grapple with the power and authority of the archive and the limits it sets on what can be known, whose perspective matters, and who is endowed with the gravity and authority of historical actor.'[146] Although Arendt displays her own form of violence regarding the archive as she

[144] Guzmàn, 2014: 58.
[145] Rose, 2012: 768.
[146] Hartman, 2019: xiii.

reads in the history of the United States not the violent foundations of settler-colonialism and *History's* normativity but the 'spirit of the laws' of revolution and beginning, I nonetheless contend that read through the knowledge of indigenous presence, Arendt's politics of natality attains a new force. Enriched by this dialogue, or perhaps simply, to follow Hartman, 'forced to grapple with the power of the archive,' natality assumes new weight as *initium.* Precisely in this sense, Arendt's politics and the texture of reality to which that politics attest become more complex. In a sense proper to this project, the constellation of earth-world-history is brought once again into a state of Heideggerian 'unconcealment.' At the same time, however, naming the violence of *History* as not simply as a physical threat to land and place, but an ontological threat to legitimacy of being-in-place, the climate crisis is now exposed as the crisis of *History*. Drawing out the voids of *History*, recognising the tradition of the oppressed, living in the wake and the afterlife of this violence has all coalesced in the identification of this particular crisis. In Chapter Six, I move to realise a second instance of natality in the context of the climate crisis, framed here against the *History's* unchecked progression into *Future*.

Chapter Six: The Future

Following my discussion in the first half of Part III of the way in which history exerts a violent force over the present, a violence that I named *History,* in this chapter I shall explore the violence that infiltrates the present from the future. Contrasted with the lingering claim to presence in the supposed 'no-longer' of a violent past, the anachronistic 'not-yet' of the future is depicted in this chapter as the *Future.*[1] *History* and *Future* name the spaces of exilic violence that I argue assume a normative status in relation to the climate crisis. In Chapter Five this normative claim over the present was depicted in relation to the historical structures of colonialism and slavery. Read through Walter Benjamin's triadic account of violence, these structures were depicted firstly as the law-making violence inaugural to the climate crisis before developing into the law-preserving violence of settler-colonialism and racialised capitalism. Denying the claim to placedness that is intrinsic to each realisation of being in action, this exilic violence undermined the integrity of earth-world-history as the locus of dwelling.

As history assumes an exilic relation to place, the very setting in which to realise those twofold political conditions of natality and plurality is lost. Locating within this violence something that operated in Benjamin as the 'rottenness of the law,' I posed a challenge in the form of Benjamin's third account of violence: the anarchic *history* of law-destroying violence.[2] Described in messianic terms as the anarchic destruction of the law, divine violence realises a revolutionary change. And yet, at the centre of divine violence's expiatory powers is its actualisation '*as* ideal, *as* possibility.'[3] This resistance to concretization is what distinguishes divine violence from the totalizing hegemony of *History.* It is this resistance to pure immanence that opens up the space in which to think an open *future.* Indeed, it is this productive agonism of a future – the *future* – that will not reveal itself that guides this chapter. Moreover, it is the appeal to something like the 'unconcealment' that originally

[1] The fallibility of this claim to a historical 'no-longer' is exposed in Benjamin's account of history's afterlife (AP: 10) and Sharpe's notion of history's 'wake' (2007), each of which make apparent the enduring legacy of historical violence.
[2] SW1: 242.
[3] Guzmàn, 2014: 58.

distinguished earth-world-history that will be central to the development of a praxis that challenges the exilic violence of *Future.*

The identification of the *Future* significantly broadens the implications identified in *History.* Where the latter marked the exilic conditions that emanate from the violent structures of settler-colonialism and racialised capitalism that were first and foremost inaugural to the climate crisis and continue to organise its preservation, the *Future* represents a fluid interplay of three distinct forms of violence. Disentangling the way in which the *Future* imposes an exilic condition over the present, I turn to the depiction of fate in Greek mythology as the *Moirai*, the three sisters who are represented as the personification of fate. My analogous reading of the *Moirai* is intended to simultaneously complicate and clarify the way in which the future of the climate crisis appears in the present. This reading responds not only to the material or earthly implications of the climate crisis in the future but also to the way in which it reduces politics to a realm of instrumentality. Consequently, part of this nuanced reading of the *Future* is what allows for the development of its exilic dimension, insofar as the threats posed by the climate crisis are depicted not simply in planetary terms but in relation to the activity of dwelling in earth-world-history. Continuing my account of the climate crisis and the violence it imposes as an *ontological* violence that threatens the experience of dwelling sets up the space in which to think something like an ontological emancipation akin to the project of *history.* Exploring the *Moirai* forms the first half of this chapter, with the second addressing the project of making *future*.

Holding on to this mode of expression, of 'making *future,'* in Chapter Five 'making *history'* coincided with the emancipatory potential of telling history otherwise, of thinking with Christina Sharpe 'in the wake' of the past or with Walter Benjamin in thinking history 'against the grain.'[4] Each of these nuanced approaches to historiography challenges the exilic violence of *History,* and lays claim to the past as a homely space. Rather than figure as a politics of lament or nostalgia, what was brought into effect was something akin to the Heideggerian 'unconcealment' of earth-world-history. What thus served as the object of unconcealment here was the ontological depth of the past. Similar to

[4] SW4: 392; Sharpe, 2016.

earth-world-history, however, this concealed past is never merely past but always already coloured by the present, the past assuming meaning as it is seen through the lens of 'now-time.' If 'making *history'* can thus be figured as a praxis of dwelling in time and drawing on the strife of what is in one sense 'no-longer' and yet nevertheless present in the traces of history, 'making *future'* can be thought in similar terms as a project of the unknown. For Arendt notions of the 'unknown' appear in her discussion of action in *The Human Condition,* in terms of the 'who/what' distinction. Where the latter refer to 'qualities, gifts, talents, and shortcomings' that may be hidden or displayed, 'who' a person is can never be told in advance but depends on the sense-making condition of human plurality.[5] If 'what' a person is coincides with the reductive ground of their immanent being, 'who' they are is a locus of concealment. Although Arendt applies this distinction to the realm of action, in the second half of this chapter I read the 'who/what' distinction into the unconcealment of earth-world-history. Returning to the original Heideggerian tropes from Chapter One then, in this chapter I develop a praxis of unconcealment that draws on the 'who' of an unknown *future.* Complicating this praxis further still, it is not simply in dwelling that I come to understand 'making *future'* but in the antagonistic experience of love.

As others writing on the topic of love observe, not least in relation to Arendt's work, it has a 'swampy' quality that can make it a difficult theme to explore.[6] Shin Chiba, whose discussion of Arendt's engagement with love is one of the few insightful commentaries on both love and its role for Arendt, teases apart its complexity and provides a rich diagnosis of its 'aporetic tension.'[7] It is precisely this aporia of love's antipolitical and political core that he draws out of Arendt's antagonistic discussion on the theme and that I reaffirm in my discussion of love's potential to 'make *future'* in a world threatened by the apolitical threats of exilic violence. Neither a condemnation nor a panacea-like solution, my approach to love turns on the capacity to see within Arendt's formulation '*amor mundi'* a love for the world that maintains the original agonism of Heidegger's earth-world encounter. Coordinated around this potential for worldly disclosure and the unconcealment of earth-

[5] HC: 179.
[6] Fletcher, 1996. On those exploring the role of love in Arendt's writing see: Barthold, 2000; Martel, 2008; Tamboukou, 2013; Tatman, 2013.
[7] Chiba, 1995.

world-history, I develop an account of love that is distinct from the subject-oriented force of passion. My defence of love's political force is drawn from Arendt's tightly woven essay, 'Introduction *into* Politics.' Although there are many instances where the aporetic tension of love appear in her writing, particularly her final book *The Life of the Mind: Willing,* it is in the essay that she describes love as a 'life-giving resource.'[8] This invocation of life, particularly in contrast to the essay's earlier discussion of the 'desertification' of the world, lends itself to the theme of making *future.* Against the exilic threat of a totalizing and empty *Future,* the life-giving depth of love uncovers the unknown depth of living (or dwelling) in relation to the *future* of earth-world-history. The emphasis that I place on the tropes of concealment and the unknown in the second half of this chapter as I develop a praxis of love as dwelling in earth-world-history distinguishes it from other accounts of love in times of planetary instability, perhaps most of all that of Bruno Latour.[9] Indeed, the antagonistic depth of love-as-dwelling that I develop here is so radically different from theories such as Latour's that I want to resist bringing them into a common discussion. The 'love' that I thus discuss in this chapter lends itself more to Heidegger's praxis of dwelling than it does to its semantic doubles in work of Latour and others.[10]

Returning to the image of the *Moirai,* I want to outline in brief the three iterations of the *Future* that they signify. Known as Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, the *Moirai* are described in Hesiod's *Theogony* as giving 'mortal men evil and good to have.'[11] And while they clearly represent the personification of fate, my invocation is not intended to suggest a form of fatalism. Indeed, in the *Eumenides* the *Moirai* are described as distributing fate justly.[12] Apportioning both good and evil, the

[8] PP: 203.
[9] The distance I maintain from Latour emerges in the object-oriented force of his appeal (1996; 2012). Namely, the centrality of a monstrous technology that Latour locates as the necessary object of love is inapplicable here. In place, my argument hinges on the necessary objectlessness of love, that it assumes form in its orientation towards the concealment of earth-world-history and is thus conditioned by a necessary opacity or resistance to immanence.
[10] Michael Hardt begins to develop an account of love that resembles that at play here (2011, see; Schwartz, 2009). Based around some of Marx's reflections on love in relation to money and property, Hardt aspires towards a notion of political love that operates a basis of solidarity and community bonds. While the implications of his argument lend themselves to my discussion insofar as they evoke a sense of Arendtian plurality, my concern is with the agonism of unconcealment as the 'object' of love and locus of political relationality. Given this emphasis on the disclosure of earth-world-history in love, Martin Hägglund's discussion of love as sense-making comes closer to my own discussion (2019).
[11] Hesiod, 2009: 30.
[12] **Aeschylus, 965**.

Moirai give texture to life and colour its events. The first of the sisters, Clotho is depicted as the 'spinner' of life's mother thread. In the context of the *Future,* I recast Clotho as Future-Clotho; the pure continuation of *History's* uninterrupted storm. Born in the inaugural violence of the climate crisis, Future-Clotho names the future that is the unchecked continuation of *History.* Read through Benjamin's reflections on the catastrophe of history, Future-Clotho is the status-quo; she 'is not an ever-present possibility but what in each case is given.'[13] Uninterrogated, Future-Clotho represents an earth-world-history to come in which the emancipatory project of *history* has failed, and the status-quo of carbon intensive living, resource exploitation, and unchecked capitalism is maintained.

The second of the *Moirai* is Lachesis. Lachesis has the task of assigning each life its thread. Known thus as the 'allotter,' Lachesis decided the individual destiny of each person. In the context of the climate crisis, Future-Lachesis refers to the claim made on politics by the forces of planetary (and hence political) necessity. Imagined as a 'yoke of instrumentality' Future-Lachesis exerts a totalizing force over the present, transforming politics from its depiction in Arendt's writing as synonymous with freedom to an activity of survival. Structured around the intersecting axes of nature/people and capitalism/non-capitalism, Future-Lachesis reduces political action to a realm of reactive instrumentality. Although Future-Lachesis can indeed realise the revolutionary politics of something like *history,* insofar as she can personify the decarbonised action necessary to planetary stability, what she nevertheless makes apparent is the reduction of political action to the demands of the climate crisis. In this precise sense then, she is the exilic condition personified. Insofar as she is not fatalism but the realisation of brute realism, Future-Lachesis is the recognition that the conditions of the climate crisis are irreversible and must lay claim to political action if the planet is to remain habitable. What Future-Lachesis thus signifies is the loss of natality's spontaneity insofar as necessity has taken reign.

The third sister of the *Moirai* is Atropos whose task it was to decide how and when each life would end. Here I invoke Future-Atropos as the amorphous image of a planetary future foretold. Most favourably depicted as the earth of 1.5 degrees of global warming, the limit set by the Paris Climate

[13] SW4: 184-5.

Agreement, Future-Atropos also names a planet of 2, 3, and 4 degrees of warming.[14] Assuming presence in the prophetic models of global warming, Future-Atropos is the insistence that each action in the present can be enfolded into an image of the future. If Future-Lachesis threatens to erode the possibility of natality in the present, it is Future-Atropos who undermines natality as having claim to future unpredictability. In the context of the climate crisis, Future-Atropos represents the claim that every action can be reduced to a calculation. Not only does she embody the foreclosure of planetary unpredictability, Future-Atropos invokes the speculative political futures described by others in the conquest between different ideologies. Articulated most thoroughly by Joel Mann and Geoff Wainwright, whose political futures are coordinated around various Lachesis-like configurations of planetary sovereignty/anti-sovereignty and capitalism/communism, Future-Atropos incorporates images of earth-world-history as both a realm of planetary instability and political ideology.[15]

Against all these forms of *Future* each of which exerts an exilic force over the present insofar as they undermine the futural quality of dwelling and threaten to wholly undermine the political conditions of natality and plurality, which depend on exactly that link to an unpredictable posterity, is my argument in Chapter 6.4 that love is *future*-making.

6.1 Future-Clotho

The first sister of the Greek *Moirai,* Clotho was tasked with spinning the thread of each life. In the context of the climate crisis, Future-Clotho is similarly positioned before the unfolding of life in the inaugural moments of the Anthropocene. In the context of the climate crisis, her presence at the origin of what comes to be the exilic condition renders her appearance somewhat prophetic. Unlike her sisters who colour life and give meaning to appearance, Future-Clotho names in advance the direction in which history moves. Her immovable rigidity and subsumption to the logic of *History* positions her in parallel with Benjamin's discussion of catastrophe: both exist as status quo. And yet, the violence of Benjamin's catastrophe and Future-Clotho is never merely limited to what is already prescribed as

[14] See Allen et al, 2018; Savaresi, 2016. On overstepping the limits of the Paris Agreement see, Held and Roger, 2018; Ivanova, 2016; Mahapatra and Ratha, 2016. On the reorientation the Agreement poses to politics, see: Dubash, 2019; Falkner, 2016.
[15] Mann and Wainwright, 2018.

oppressed, rather both assume a centripetal function, forever growing and drawing more and more under their reign. To the degree that Future-Clotho cloaks earth-world-history as a locus of unconcealment and ontological agonism, she reflects the limits advanced by Achille Mbembe in the 'becoming black of the world.'[16]

Mbembe's depiction of 'becoming black' radically extends understandings of the present crisis as catastrophic. Hence, where others such as T J Demos describe the way in which 'it is the uninterrupted, accident-free, normal running of the fossil economy' that underpins the planetary crisis, Mbembe challenges the very meaning of 'normal running' to recognise the way in which this normalization of planetary violence (what I understand as the exilic condition) is an all-encompassing and ever-expanding violence.[17] Developed out of his discussion on the history of slavery – the same history that coordinates the exilic violence of *History* in this project – Mbembe's argument hinges on the claim that 'the systematic risks experienced specifically by Black slaves during early capitalism have now become the norm for, or at least the lot of, all of subaltern humanity.'[18] Rather than negate the specificity of this violence, Mbembe exposes its present normalisation. And so, when he further clarifies what he sees as once definitive of the term "Black" – that it demarcated a condition of dispossession imposed upon certain individuals – as extrapolated into a general worldly condition, he makes a claim about what it means to inhabit what I am calling earth-world-history under Future-Clotho.

Mbembe's initial depiction of the slave as imprisoned within the 'dungeon of appearance' echoes Arendt's argument that the slave is reduced to their mere physicality.[19] Unable to disclose themselves and enter into a plurality in which the natality of each individual is made and recognised as meaningful, the condition of the slave is that of speechlessness. At a more metaphysical level, the condition of the slave, what Mbembe calls the 'becoming Black' and what I define in spatial terms as the 'exilic condition' is the condition of being present in absence. What Mbembe urges his reader to understand as the 'becoming Black of the world' is the way in which the slave is dispossessed 'of the

[16] CBR
[17] Demos, 2012: 37.
[18] CBR: 4.
[19] CBR: 2.

future and of time, the two matrices of the possible.'[20] It is this, perhaps more than the general subordination of whole communities to an apolitical status that strikes at the centre of what it means to live in the anachronistic wake of Future-Clotho. The violent mark that is left by a *Future* that lays siege to the potential to think the futural-inclination of being undermines the very premise of dwelling as unconcealment.[21] Robbed of an image of the future as the realm of the unpredictable, Future-Clotho levies an impasse between action and its unpredictable ends.

As the immanent and uninterrupted continuation of *History,* coordinated between the intersecting axes of settler-colonialism and racialised capitalism, Future-Clotho is the realisation of Frederic Jameson's infamous lament that it's easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.[22] Perhaps more acutely then, Future-Clotho signals a crisis of the imagination, a crisis in the limits of thinking to imagine beyond the ideological bounds of colonialism and capitalism. What is telling about this failure of the imagination, a failure that Arendt describes in terms of a 'crisis,' is the way in which it reveals a particular current of nihilism. Namely, that even in the clarity afforded in the act of naming of *History* and Future-Clotho as the source of exilic violence in earth-world-history – what Arendt refers to in relation to the crisis as the exposition of the façades that dissemble reality – another future cannot be imagined.[23] In this moment, as hope is relinquished and the becoming black of the world accepted as natural law, the crisis becomes a disaster. Arendt identifies this transition as the moment in which judgment is forsaken.

Recalling Benjamin's language of historical messianism and the fulfilment of Judgment Day only once the 'past has become citable in all its moments,' the forfeiting of hope signals the forfeiting of judgment itself.[24] The coincidence of hope and judgment hangs on the role played by the future in the present. Relinquished as a space of unknown creation, judgment on the creation of the future is forsaken. Hence, for Arendt, 'a crisis becomes a disaster only when we respond to it with preformed judgments, that is, with prejudices. Such an attitude not only sharpens the crisis but makes us forfeit

[20] CBR: 5-6.
[21] BT: 321-324.
[22] Jameson, 1994: xii.
[23] BPF: 174.
[24] SW4: 390.

the experience of reality and the opportunity for reflection it provides.'[25] Without reflection on the coming and going of the world, without, that is, a sense that the world might change, despair becomes the handmaiden of judgment's decline. This forfeiting of reality encapsulates the dispossession of freedom that occurs in the becoming black of the world.

Tracing the historical fault line of colonial desire around which the becoming black of the world unfolds, Mbembe describes the way in which this desire 'to divide and classify, to create hierarchies and produce difference' puts into motion conditions of lived difference in modernity. The continued reduction of appearance to physicality and the invention of race 'to signify exclusion, brutalization, and degradation,' assumes a prophetic claim over the future.[26] And so, in an apparent evocation of Future-Clotho, Mbembe describes the way in which 'Black…the word has its own weight, its own destiny.'[27] That 'Blackness' assumes a normative force is further clarified in his argument that the designation Black yields a name he did not chose, but one that was inherited because of the position he occupies in the world.[28] This invocation of the world and the place of subjects within it points to the synonymy between oppression and placedness and the fracturing of that claim to be-in-place as central to what it means to be dispossessed. As he develops the way in which Blackness imposes a spatial limitation, in which 'to be Black is to be stuck at the foot of a wall with no doors,' he invokes the images of the exilic condition that necessitate the present absence of the oppressed. In the climate crisis, to be exiled from the clearing that opens up in each act of dwelling in earth-world-history inheres both the refusal of the right-to-placedness and the denigration of earth-world-history itself. It is this loss of meaning that clarifies the distinction between *History* as crisis and *Future* (or at least Future-Clotho) as disaster. In the former, the potential of redemption persists in the capacity to read history 'against the grain'; in the latter what is given up is the groundwork of hope on which anarchic beginnings depend.

While Mbembe sees a path of resistance against the becoming black of the world in the recognition of human plurality, which he describes as a 'community of singularities and difference,'

[25] PP: 171.
[26] CBR: 6.
[27] CBR: 151.
[28] Ibid.

Future-Clotho, as both a planetary *and* an ontological threat, a threat to both the integrity of place and the condition of placedness itself, consistently challenges this claim.[29] In other words, even as the 'frenzied codification of social life according to norms' that is the becoming black of the world is challenged, what remains is the literal wreckage of its wake. In the climate crisis what *History* and Future-Clotho insist upon is the ineliminable presence of planetary instability: bushfire, drought, ocean acidification, glacier retreat and cyclone. And so, while both *History* and Future-Clotho can indeed be challenged via appeals to the law of earthly plurality and the recognition of placedness as a claim legitimately shared amongst all dwellers of earth-world-history (the coincidence of rights and earth-world-history was explored in Chapter Three), whether this claim can bring about the rupture necessary for a messianic intervention in which the status of earth-world-history is recast from one of exile to one of agonistic home-making remains unclear.

6.2 Future-Lachesis

Future-Lachesis significantly broadens the exilic condition imposed by Future-Clotho. Although Lachesis remains exemplary of the way in which narratives of planetary apocalypse are imposed on the future, what she embodies is the forfeiting of spontaneity in the present. With this loss of natality's spontaneity what Future-Lachesis embodies *is* the exilic condition. Known as the 'allotter' of life's events, Lachesis determines the content of the mother thread spun by her sister Clotho. Before this thread of life is cut off by Atropos, Lachesis gives texture to its appearance, determining the individual destiny of each thread. In Plato's *Republic* the people are described as going before Lachesis in whose lap lie the lots and patterns of each life.[30] Tasked with assigning each life its contents, in the context of the climate crisis Future-Lachesis allots a 'yoke of necessity,' undermining the scope of freedom as she reduces action to a praxis of survival. Limiting action to a domain determined almost exclusively by the planetary demands of the climate crisis, Future-Lachesis represents the thresholds that prevent the fulfilment of natality and plurality.

[29] CBR: 158.
[30] Plato, 2013: 10.617.

Framed as the mythological embodiment of the exilic condition then, Future-Lachesis puts into relief the implications of living in the wake of *History* and Future-Clotho. Although not by necessity a destructive figure – at least not insofar as she can aspire to projects of decarbonisation and revolutionary politics – what Future-Lachesis reveals is the limited potential of action under the exilic condition to enact those unpredictable new beginnings so intrinsic to the twofold faculties of natality and plurality. In other words, if the structural forces that maintain the climate crisis are, as was shown in Chapter Five, settler-colonialism and racialised capitalism, what Future-Lachesis 'allots' in the present is the necessary recourse of action to these intersecting axes. And so, while this claim over action is not in and of itself problematic, insofar as action *must* contend with these forms of systemic violence if *history* is to be realised and judgment redeemed, what becomes problematic is the degree to which politics is made to serve only life's necessities.[31]

Hinged between a nihilistic form of fatalism and brute realism, Future-Lachesis poses a direct threat to Arendt's claim that the meaning of politics is freedom. The specific form of exilic violence that thus unfolds in the context of Future-Lachesis is one that is determined by the unfreedom of life under necessity. Again, it is this negation of human potential that Arendt identifies in the labour of the slave, whose activity is bound by a form of instrumentality. As entry into the Arendtian *polis* required (at least for Arendt) 'mastering the necessities of life,' entry was thus prohibited for slaves who remained defined by precisely those necessities.[32] Closely connected to the becoming black of the world, Future-Lachesis normalises a mode of slavery in which servitude is recast as instrumentalism. The exilic violence of Lachesis is thus felt in the disjunction with which it meets Arendt's claim that the meaning of politics is freedom.[33] Namely, in Future-Lachesis there is no freedom or politics, there is only submission to laws of necessity. For Arendt this eventuates to something like the law of the desert: life in an alienated world in which the meaning of politics has been divorced from the activity of freedom and the spontaneity of natality.[34] Indeed, in such a world the very idea of politics is

[31] Arendt uses this description of 'serving only life's necessities' to describe the life proper to the slave, see HC: 314.
[32] HC: 37.
[33] PP: 108
[34] PP: 190.

chimeric, for what is at play in such a desert is the mere act of species survival and no claim to the act of dwelling. Devoid of meaning, life under Future-Lachesis is life determined *a priori* by the demands of seeking stability under conditions of planetary instability.

Evidence of the demands of Lachesis can be seen in the organising binaries around which responses to the climate crisis are currently formed. As outlined in two recent monographs on theories of environmental futures, I want to position the central framework around the axes of nature/people and capitalism/non-capitalism.[35] In the context of the so-called 'conservation debate' I turn to Bram Büscher and Robert Fletcher, who effectively outline what I further qualify as an instance of Lachesis' 'yoke of planetary necessity.'[36] Although this debate warrants greater nuance, at its core Büscher and Fletcher identify two recurrent trends: on the one hand, the 'neoprotectionists' who argue that 'separation between people and nature is needed to stave off a collapse of all life-supporting ecosystems,' a separation that is commonly envisaged as the division of the planet into a 'human half' and a 'natural half.'[37] On the other hand, 'new conservationists' who aim to go beyond nature-people dichotomies, arguing that 'instead of pursuing the protection of biodiversity for biodiversity's sake, a new conservation should seek to enhance those natural systems that benefit the widest number of people, especially the poor.'[38] While the first invokes images of Edenic oases amidst human worlds ravaged by violence, the latter effects a realisation of Heidegger's technological worldview: the earth as exploitable 'standing-reserve.'[39] In the context of environmental philosophy, traces of these binaries emerge in what Paul Voice identifies as a disciplinary impasse: 'stuck in an unproductive opposition between anthropocentric and biocentric views [in which] it seems that either one rejects the anthropocentric thesis of nature as utility [neoprotectionists], or accepts some version of the biocentric thesis and reject utility as a justifiable approach to nature [new conservation].'[40]

[35] Büscher and Fletcher, 2020 and Mann and Wainwright, 2018.
[36] For an overview of this debate see Büscher and Fletcher, 2020; Brockington et al., 2008.
[37] Lele goes on to point out that 'Unsurprisingly, the "half" of the earth to be put under "protection" happens to be largely in the Global South, which has led to heavy criticism of the proposal as both unjust and ineffective (2020: 51). See also: Büscher et al., 2016; Wilson, 2016; Wuerthner et al., 2015.
[38] see; Kareiva et al., 2011; Lorimer, 2015; Mansfield et al., 2015.
[39] Heidegger, 1977. Elements of Heidegger's argument regarding the management of nature reappear in the context of conservationism, see Marris, 2011.
[40] Voice, 2013: 182. See also Iturbe, 2019.

In Geoff Mann and Joel Wainwright's parallel inquiry into the status of the future, they present a series of evolving binaries that moves between capitalism/non-capitalism and planetary sovereignty/anti-planetary sovereignty.[41] Framing the future through a more nuanced lens, Mann and Wainwright aim to weave together political economics with ecological arrangements. The varying dichotomies that they develop reflect a second, more simplistic instance of the planetary yoke that I ascribe to Future-Lachesis in terms of the debate about the Green New Deal (GND). Closely connected to the first axis of nature/people by virtue of the inextricable link between economic growth and destruction of the natural world, this second axis incorporates questions regarding decarbonisation and economic degrowth (Mann and Wainwright's non-capitalism).[42] Solutions such as the GND counter appeals for 'green transformations' of capitalism. In place, they insist on the exposition of capitalism as the violent structure with which climate policy must contend.[43] Yet, even within the apparent radicality of these transformations, capitalism endures in the form of so-called 'eco-capitalism' – this was the danger identified above by Voice.

As Elisa Iturbe writes, even 'environmental projects such as those appearing in the work of Buckminster Fuller, the pages of *Whole Earth Catalog,* or the writings of eco-anarchist Murray Bookchin openly attacked the environmental damage wrought by capitalist society…nonetheless championed a carbon fuelled technoscape that they thought would lead to post-labour abundance. The underlying conditions of carbon energy were left uninterrogated and undisturbed.'[44] It is precisely this subsumption of 'radical' environmental thought to the logic of capital that exposes the degree to which capital itself has 'exiled' alternative political imaginaries, rendering the disentangling of climate action from capitalism seemingly impossible. Proponents of the GND call this alternative the 'faux Green New Deal' given its failure to critically examine the underlying structures of the climate crisis. Akin to the politics of the new conservationist who advocates planetary 'care' as a means towards capitalist ends, eco-capitalism is evidence of the insidious way in which Future-Lachesis has

[41] Mann and Wainwright, 2018: 29.
[42] See; Barbier, 2010; Pettifor, 2019; Schwartzman, 2011.
[43] For some like Pollin, continued economic growth is central to environmental strategy, see; Pollin, 2018.
[44] Iturbe, 2019: 19.

rendered political theory exilic, unable to respond to the call of earth-world-history to think and act otherwise.

Though distinct in terms of their organising framework, both the conservation debate and the capitalist/non-capitalist argument progress an instrumentalist argument regarding political action. Framed as *the* fundamental axes around which politics must be coordinated if it is to ensure either the continuation of the capitalist structures in place – a future that would simply perpetuate the mythological violence of *History* and Future-Clotho – or the mitigation of planetary violence through a reappraisal of the structures that coordinate dwelling, both iterations of Future-Lachesis expose the reconfiguration of politics as the locus of necessity. Advocates of the GND makes the case that 'in the twenty-first century, all politics are climate politics,' a declaration that, while radical, also exposes the ineliminable necessity of political instrumentality.[45] Arendt anticipated such a transformation of the political in her identification of the rise of the social. Described as the transformation of the *polis* by the demands of the private, namely the demands of necessity, Arendt saw the rise of the social as coinciding with the subsumption of action to labour. Voice provides an account of the movement from private to public, as one of 'supersizing' the principles that govern life in the private, thus producing a social realm in which political action is subordinated 'to the imperatives of consumption.'[46] This transition from the necessity of biological life to the 'imperatives of consumption' marks Arendt as an early critic of the cultic demands of neo-liberal capitalism.

Although the products of labour are necessary to the fulfilment of a proper human life, in which work and action are also realized, the subject who is reduced to labour is the slave, invoking once again Mbembe's account of the becoming Black of the world. In the context of modern politics, Arendt recasts the slave as the *animal laborans,* for whom life is 'imprisonment in the ever-recurring cycle of the life process…forever subject to the necessity of labour and consumption.'[47] Exposing the dangers of political instrumentalism and the threat of servitude, Arendt's argument about the status of the *animal laborans* hinges on the fact that it can be imposed on others. Which is merely to say that

[45] Aronoff et al, 2019: 3.
[46] Voice, 2013: 181.
[47] HC: 236.

the status of the *animal laborans* is always marked by a threatening violence and the potential imposition of servitude. In other words, while action and the disclosure of the self coincide with the fulfilment of a properly human life, engaging oneself in the activity of labour is not requisite to this realisation: it can be forced on another.[48] Arendt's division of the *vita activa,* while it thus stipulates that action must be performed by the individual if they are to assume a life proper to the being of being human, makes clear that labour need not be performed by all. Indeed, part of her division between the private and the public presupposes that, in the former, violence could be imposed on others in order to make them labour, hence the violent relationship between the slave-master and the enslaved. By contrast, in the public *polis* all individuals are greeted with equality, having overcome the liminal conditions for entry which presume the attainment of sufficient living conditions such that those more profound faculties of natality and plurality can be fully realised.

While Arendt attempts to ensure the integrity of the political domain by emphasising those conditions for entry, which confirm the intrinsic equality of all members insofar as they are not wanting in any immediate or biological sense, this leaves the private open to the very real threat of violence. Arendt is thus led to a position that equates the subjection of the individual to the laws of necessity – as in the slave or the *animal laborans* – with the logic of violence. As she writes, 'because all human beings are subject to necessity, they are entitled to violence toward others; violence is the prepolitical act of liberating oneself from the necessity of life for the freedom of the world.'[49] Having established this fixed distinction between the prepolitical necessities for freedom and political freedom itself, Arendt saw the rise of the social in which the limited demands of the private exceeded what she saw as the properly political pursuits of the *polis* as the destruction of politics as such. While Arendt's condemnation of the social as the locus in which private concerns are displaced into the public realm is typically read as an affront to feminist appeals to 'make the private public' and hence in tacit complicity with more masculine conceptions of the political, the rise of environmental concerns or responses to the climate crisis reveal the prescience of her threefold reading of the *vita*

[48] LMT: 19.
[49] HC: 31.

activa as comprised of labour, work, and action.[50] While what is brought into consideration in the climate crisis is the ineliminable necessity of thinking the immanent and biological demands of life, this demand cannot go on to assume primacy over the integrity of politics as a locus of plurality, novelty and agonism. In such a scenario what is lost is the unpredictable spontaneity that coincides with the realisation of natality and plurality in political action.

The subject of much rehearsal, Arendt's hierarchically structured division of human activity portends a set of conditions which are prerequisite to politics, and hence, so too to freedom. To be free, that is, to appear before others within a *polis* means to *not* 'be subject to the necessity of life or to the command of another *and* not to be in command oneself. It meant neither to rule nor to be ruled.'[51] Arendt's remarks here are uncannily attuned to the threats to freedom imposed by the climate crisis. Perhaps more than at any other time, the crisis makes stark that humanity is subject to the singular necessity of ensuring that the earth remains habitable. In Chapter Three I made this necessity explicit in relation to the right-to-placedness that is co-present in the condition of natality. And while the varying responses to the climate crisis advocate 'freedom' as an organising goal, my caution regarding their realisation pertains precisely to their instrumentalization of freedom.

Pope Francis' 2015 ecological encyclical *Laudato Si`* made precisely this link between the current governance of the climate crisis and the erosion of human freedoms. Responding not simply to the unfreedom of living at the precipice of climate instability, Francis identified an insidious condition of unfreedom that corresponds to the generalisation of Mbembe's becoming Black of the world or the normalisation of the exilic condition. In the encyclical's conclusion Francis named the obstacles to radical climate action as the systemic structures of Benjamin's mythological violence:

> We lack the leadership capable of striking out on new paths and meeting the needs of the present with concern for all and without prejudice towards coming generations. The establishment of a legal framework which can set clear boundaries and ensure the protection

[50] See; Dietz, 2002; Pitkin, 1998; Zerilli, 2005. Arendt does actually engage questions of domestic labour consonant with the feminist claim that the personal is political in a short book review, 'On the Emancipation of Women' (EU: 66-68).
[51] HC: 32.

> of ecosystems has become indispensable; otherwise, the new power structures based on the techno-economic paradigm *may overwhelm not only our politics but also freedom and justice.*[52]

Francis' condemnation of modern politics coincides with their inability to realise the anarchic force of Benjamin's divine violence and redeem freedom.

This point becomes clearer still through Arendt's clarification that political freedom is a 'spatial construct.'[53] Developed in her reading of the Athenian *polis* as the public space of politics, as contrasted with the private realm of necessity, for Arendt, to assume space, or to act upon the placedness of being, is to be free. Drawn from the Greek depiction of the private as corresponding to a state of deprivation, Arendt's account of life lived exclusively in the private domain was of one denied the fulfilment of those conditions proper to the being of being human. The realisation of the latter was made possible only once the private was overcome and the latent (and nascent) potential of the self to enact natality realised. Arendt reinforces this point by positioning a life lived only in the private in the same terrain as the slave who was refused entry to the *polis* and the barbarian who was incapable of establishing a *polis.*[54] The tropes of separation or imprisonment that accompany the images of the slave and barbarian anticipate the exilic condition of Future-Lachesis. What is critical to recall however is that Arendt's slave is not incapable of political action, they are not '*aneu logon,'* which is to say, they are deprived 'not of the faculty of speech, but of a way of life in which speech and only speech made sense and where the central concern of all citizens was to talk with each other.'[55] In much the same way, those rendered exilic by *History* or the yoke of planetary necessity are not incapable of speech, the political action *par excellence,* they are rendered mute by a world that has eroded the very condition of spontaneity.

The difficulty of reconciling with the presence of Future-Lachesis is that unlike her sister Future-Clotho who stands at the forefront of earth-world-history shouting out *a* prophetic destiny for

[52] Francis, 2015: 53.
[53] PP: 119.
[54] See HC: 38-49.
[55] HC: 27.

humanity drawn from the violent origins of the climate crisis and who can be challenged in the revolutionary and messianic acts of the *historian,* Future-Lachesis cannot be overcome. Thus, while it is conceivable to think in terms of 'a' destiny told by Clotho, one that is either the continuation of *History,* principally in terms of the perpetuation of a carbon intensive capitalist economy, or not; Lachesis and the necessity to think in terms of a form of political instrumentality is undeniable. Indeed, if the future is to be redeemed as a locus of action in which earth-world-history might once again be figured in terms of a concealed depth, the ineliminable presence of Future-Lachesis *must* assume an organising function. While the ideological force of Future-Clotho threatens the prevention of those measures necessary for planetary survival, Lachesis, or rather the iteration of Lachesis that assumes a critique of capital as essential, assumes a status akin to that of the *pharmakon.* Both a poison and a cure, Lachesis denies the present its claim to spontaneous beginning while setting up the condition for something like the *future* – the open and expansive correlate of *history.* Whether this recognition of the need for brute realism and political instrumentality now means that action is caught in a means-end equation for the liberation of the *future* is a pivotal question.

What is thus critical to remember in discussing Future-Lachesis and what will remain pertinent as I turn to engage Future-Atropos is that the yoke of instrumentality to which they affix the political institution is not necessarily oppressive in the same way that Future-Clotho is. While the latter coincides with the continued oppression of *History*, Lachesis and Atropos can and may well invoke the pragmatic response taken by a society that wants to contend with the reality of the climate and redeem the future as a space of potential. Indeed, responding to the climate crisis requires precisely such a realism that aligns with pragmatic, instrumental action. Beyond the ontological questions of what it means to dwell in an exilic earth-world-history which imposes forms of violence not simply through the logic of carbon intensive capitalism and settler-colonialism, there is the very real threat of planetary instability. It is clear that the threat of bushfire, drought, cyclones, sea-level rise and ocean acidification will require that political institutions assume a praxis of political instrumentality. Moreover, what will continue to be necessary is the inclusion of speculative planetary futures described by the fluid Future-Atropos in developing these political responses. However, what I persist in calling the exilic dimension of Future-Lachesis and what I will show in relation to Future-

Atropos is that in addition to, or perhaps in spite of this instrumental realism, those conditions of natality and plurality to which Arendt understood politics to have meaning as a praxis specific to dwelling in earth-world-history *must* be engaged. Insofar as the climate crisis raises questions that 'concern not merely a transformation *in* politics – more representative proceduralism, for example, or more precautionary environmental policy-making, but a transformation *of* the political' conditions like natality and plurality must remain at the forefront of political thought.[56] Mbembe invokes a similar argument for a change *of* the political that incorporates natality and plurality as the conditions of earth-world-history dwelling. Reflecting on the status of democracy in modern politics, he laments both its anthropocentrism, arguing that 'we must extend its meaning so democracy can include more than just us,' *and* its limited historicism.[57] Hence, he appeals for a different ethics that incorporates remembrance not simply as a praxis of memory but of placed dwelling. Memory thus serves not only the condition of plurality but the fact of human earthliness; namely, the fact that 'there is only one world [which] we are all entitled to by our very existence.'[58]

Relinquishing the need to redeem Arendt's twofold conditions, both of which operate – as shown in Chapter Three– in a paradigm of vulnerability, reciprocity and inclined exposure of the self, incurs a turn towards the more pragmatic certitude of instrumentality. What is lost at this moment are those guiding principles that make politics meaningful as a sphere of human interaction. Without natality and plurality and a conception of the political in excess of pure reason, dwelling, the activity proper to earth-world-history, is undermined. Hence, even after securing the demands thrust upon the *animal laborans,* Arendt invokes a second realm of activity that fails to fulfil the conditions proper to action or dwelling. It is this second figure, even as they respond to something like the 'yoke of planetary necessity' that nevertheless exists outside the agonistic space of dwelling in earth-world-history. Arendt's account of the *homo faber,* insofar as they respond to the instrumental demands of maintaining the world, anticipates the calculative demands on the imagination by Future-Lachesis. Indeed, she writes in *The Human Condition* that '*homo faber* conducts himself as lord and master of

[56] Mann and Wainwright, 2018: 28. A similar shift in the status of science is also apparent in the age of the climate crisis, see Turnhout, 2018.
[57] Goldberg, 2018: 217.
[58] Ibid.

the whole earth.'[59] If the pragmatism of Future-Lachesis attempts to resolve the demands of the climate crisis by coordinating action along the intersecting axes of nature/people and capitalist/non-capitalist, then it is this understanding of work as the mastery of earth that is at play. In further anticipation of the current collapse of the earth-world-history antagonism that creates space for the imaginative unconcealment of meaning, Arendt qualifies the *homo faber's* domination of the earth as 'by definition bound to result…only after destroying part of God-created nature.'[60] The productivity of the worker is thus bound up with a type of originary violence. Much like the perpetuation of Benjamin's mythological violence, the work of the *homo faber* persists in a mode of being that is bound in advance to a logic that undermines its productive potential. What is incumbent upon the worker is their engagement with the world at large, namely with earth-world-history, in such a way that what is sought is not the resurrection of a nostalgic image nor the creation of an ideological future. What is needed, to parse Mann and Wainwright, is a change *of* work as the activity proper to dwelling.[61] I seek such a change in the sense-making praxis of love at the conclusion of this chapter.

6.3 Future-Atropos

The cutter of life's thread, the third of the Greek *Moirai,* Atropos, approaches the living with her 'abhorred shears and slits the thin-spun life' that binds each soul to the movement of earth-world-history.[62] The status Future-Atropos is perhaps best captured by Albert Pope's remark that 'today we are living out the future's past.' Pope goes onto write that while technically speaking this has always been the case, 'there are moments in history when the present has been overtaken by a future, a future so broadly anticipated that it begins to block out the concerns of the day.'[63] It is this blinding force of a future that is so anticipated that its various manifestations, coordinated around those archetypal imaginaries of 1.5, 2, 3, 4 degrees of warming, that has blocked out the light of the present and left a shadowy state of exile in its wake. Future-Atropos extinguishes the flame of uncertainty that runs

[59] HC: 139.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Mann and Wainwright, 2018: 28.
[62] Milton, 1874: 63.
[63] Pope, 2019: 145.

throughout claims such as that of social historian Eric Hobsbawm who claimed, at the close of the 20th century that 'we do not know where we are going.'[64] Future-Atropos thereby makes apparent that although the future remains clouded insofar as which degree of action, whether that's adaptation or mitigation, undertaken in the present remains unknown, an image of the planetary future nevertheless persists in fluid form.

Whether the earth remains within the boundary set by the Paris climate accords of 1.5 degrees of warming or falls radically beyond this point, at each instance is Future-Atropos: a speculative model of sea-level rise, cyclone frequency, or drought extremity. Not only is Future-Atropos an ecological image, so too is she evident in political theories of post-capitalism, sovereignty, borders and migration. Mann and Wainwright's political theories of planetary future fall into these exact categories. Divided between sovereignty and capitalism, Mann and Wainwright identify four iterations of the future to which I alluded in the previous section, they name the final of these 'Climate X.' The only future to challenge the instrumental logic of the others, Climate X is both non-capitalist and anti-sovereign, as such Mann and Wainwright position it as the 'ethically and politically superior' alternative.[65] In a certain sense then, Climate X is the anarchic image of Benjamin's divine violence, while the others echo the intersecting axes that coordinate Future-Lachesis, X fulfils divine violence's actualisation '*as* ideal, *as* possibility, lying like a shadow just beyond our reach.'[66]

And yet, rather than lament the opacity of Climate X, Mann and Wainwright's provocation on the future of planetary politics concludes hopefully:

> Our task is to see the ruins and fragments of our natural-historical moment for what they truly are; not to draw up blueprints of an emancipated world, but to reject Leviathan, Mao, and Behemoth, while affirming other possibilities. What remains? All we have and all we have ever had: X to solve for, a world to win.[67]

[64] Hobsbawm, 1994: 585.
[65] Mann and Wainwright, 2018: 30.
[66] Guzmàn, 2014: 58.
[67] Mann and Wainwright, 2018: 197.

Nevertheless, the ambiguity of Climate X risks its being overlooked. In a moment of crisis such as that of the present climate-crisis, the opacity of Climate X can be conceived as a limit, something to be overcome in pursuit of the more fixed and reliable iterations of the three other climate futures that Mann and Wainwright describe. Although each of these speculations is stained with the violence that has thus far organised the climate crisis, the exilic logic of sovereignty over the colonised and the racialised oppression of capitalism, they claim to provide a sense of security. In that sense, the images of Future-Atropos, whether imagined as the political *Futures* outlined by Mann and Wainwright or as the earthly *Futures* of climatic modelling, overtake the present as a space of creation.

What is forfeited with Future-Atropos is the depth of unconcealment in the constellation earth-world-history, for implicit within each of these speculative *Futures* is something like the totalization of *History.* If the ambiguity of Climate X feels like a naïve attempt to break away from the grip of Future-Atropos, it is not because of some fallibility in the privileging of the unknown but because the task of responding to earth-world-history in the present has been resigned. While this first emerges in Future-Lachesis as action is overtaken by the activity proper to the *animal laborans* cum *homo faber* in the instrumentalization of politics, it takes more concrete form in Pope's conjecture that 'we are living out the future's past.' It assumes further prescience still in the lament that what has assumed a state of atrophy under the weight of the climate crisis is the imagination. First explored at length by Amitav Ghosh as the 'crisis of the imagination' and later on by Naomi Klein as the presentation of an 'imaginative asphyxiation,' the fracturing of the imagination grows out of the becoming Black of the world.[68] This entropy is not the same as the exilic violence imposed during slavery which, in spite of its tremendous violence nevertheless saw the production of profound works of the imagination.[69] Where the becoming Black of the world coincides with the eradication of the imagination is in the unquestioned acceptance of its fate. In other words, the specific danger of the becoming Black of the world as it appears today is that it does not refuse this violence but allows it to assume an insidious claim over the human condition of being-in-place.

[68] Ghosh, 2016; Klein, 2019. These ideas of a gradual erasure of the imagination are captured in the notion of the 'agnotocene.' Introduced by Bonneuil and Fressoz, the agnotocene refers to the ideological production of 'zones of ignorance' in which the imagination is vanquished (2018: 198).
[69] See Hartman, 1997.

Arendt describes the way in which the conditions of the private, those that coordinate Future-Lachesis and the becoming Black, are overcome via the imagination as a process of liberation. In her reflections on judgment, she argues that it is the imagination that enables 'us to *liberate* ourselves from [these conditions] and to attain that relative impartiality that is the specific virtue of judgment.'[70] Returning to the constellation of earth-world-history, it is via the imagination and the liberation from life's necessities that Arendt can be seen to champion a particular kind of dwelling as dwelling-in-imaginative-creation. Recalling Heidegger's language on dwelling as the realisation of being-in-place, Arendt writes that 'this earthly home becomes a world in the proper sense of the word only when the totality of fabricated things is so organised that it can resist the consuming life process of the people dwelling in it, and thus outlast them. Only where such survival is assured do we speak of culture.'[71] Resisting the reduction of the imagination to a realm determined exclusively by the artistic profession, Arendt recalls that 'each time we talk about things that can be experienced only in privacy or intimacy, we bring them out into a sphere where they will assume a kind of reality which, their intensity notwithstanding, they never could have had before.'[72] Realised anew in each act of disclosure, the imagination resounds as one of the modalities through which earth-world-history is drawn into unconcealment. The imagination thus accords in this instance with what it means to dwell.

Returning to Pope's conjecture that the present is living out the future's past and Arendt's lament that the absence of imagination coincides with the erosion of dwelling as the 'doing' proper to earth-world-history, Ghosh reflects on the status of the present, asking if future earth dwellers will consider our present a time of 'Great Derangement.' Employing Heidegger's language of concealment, Ghosh asks if those in the future will conclude that 'ours was a time when most forms of art and literature were drawn into modes of concealment that prevented people from recognising the realities of their plight?'[73] Developing a critique of the present as undermined by a limited grasp of the imagination, Ghosh and others highlight the cracks of possibility through which a *future,* irreducible to the violence

[70] Arendt, 1982: 73.
[71] BPF: 206.
[72] HC: 50.
[73] Ghosh, 2016: 11.

of the climate crisis might exist.[74] What their speculations reveal is that insofar as it remains possible to think the imagination – even in its apparent absence – the possibility of hope exists.

It is precisely this possibility, found in the moment of its absence, to which Mann and Wainwright attain in their discussion of Climate X. What is sought is something that persists as unknowable. Indeed, it is the quality of being unknown, of being beyond reach and hence of soliciting a call to search, disclose and unconceal, that serves as the productive challenge to Future-Atropos: hence the appeal 'all we have and all we have ever had: X to solve for, a world to win.[75] In the epilogue to her essay 'Introduction *into* Politics' Arendt describes precisely such a moment. Revisiting the provocation, why is there anything at all and not rather nothing, Arendt turns towards plurality, rephrasing the question as 'why is there anybody at all and not rather nobody?'[76] In this move away from the objective quality of the world, or indeed of earth-world-history, Arendt clarifies what is at stake in times of crisis. Pursuing this line, I want to conclude this final diagnostic section on the exilic threats of the *Future* and Future-Atropos specifically through an analogous reading of Arendt's 'who' and 'what' distinction.[77]

First explored in *The Human Condition* as a way to give depth to the faculty of action and its connection to speech, Arendt makes a distinction between the 'what' qualities of an individual – the objective qualities they either share or don't share with all others – and the specificity of *who* they are. It is this latter quality, disclosed in speech and enriching the web of relations that organises political community. In the language of concealment, the 'who' of someone is brought into unconcealment in the space of appearance. To return once again to the image of the slave, 'who' the slave is remains unexplored, in place they are reduced to 'what' they are. Unable to enter into an imaginative exchange where 'who' the slave is becomes a provocation for the other, the web of relations in which slave and oppressor operate becomes hollow. A similar crisis of the imagination takes place in the relationship between the present and Future-Atropos. Overwhelmed by the images of a future that insists upon the

[74] This space of speculative fiction and thinking the future otherwise operates across the arts, see Demos, 2018; Ghosh, 2016; Streeby, 2018; Varoufakis, 2020.
[75] Mann and Wainwright, 2018: 197.
[76] PP: 204.
[77] See HC: 179-187.

violence of planetary instability and political necessity, imagining 'who' this future earth-world-history might be is diminished. The analogous reading of 'what' as Future-Atropos and 'who' as a more undefined and concealed *future,* is not simply a poetic mode of recalling that each moment in time is occupied by a plurality of people and hence a potential richness in 'who' dwells in earth-world-history at any one time. Rather the point I am trying to make is that earth-world-history itself lays claim to a form of 'whoness.' 'Who' is earth-world-history is disclosed in the acts of dwelling that seek meaning beyond the instrumentality of politics inherent to the ideologies of colonialism or capitalism while also refusing to live merely on the earth without creating conditions proper to the natality of human beings. What is realised in this second act of resistance is the actualisation of that original human condition of being born-in-place, in so doing, what is reaffirmed in the pursuit of earthly 'whoness' is the logic of rights that exist within the right-to-placedness (Chapter Three). Without going so far as to give agency to earth-world-history, I do want to make the case here that what remains unconcealed within this constellation and what calls those who dwell within it to reflect upon their condition of being-in-place echoes Arendt's distinction between who and what.

If it can be argued that what it means to live as though Future-Atropos is definitive of living in place in earth-world-history parallels Arendt's account of 'whatness,' to enter into a relation in which the other is the unknown and earth-world-history acknowledged as *unknowable* is to realize the irreducibility of life to the immanent givenness of its placedness (its 'whatness'). While life persists in-place, it is the immanence of whatness, its always-already disclosedness that distinguishes it from the agonistic move between concealment and unconcealment that is its 'whoness.' Refusing the totality that is Future-Atropos does not then mean denying the reality of the climate crisis in either political or scientific terms. On the contrary, for Arendt 'who' someone is 'comes to the fore where people are with others and neither for nor against them – that is, in sheer human togetherness.'[78] It is precisely this togetherness that makes possible earth-world-history as the place proper to the human dwelling. In other words, prerequisite to overcoming the exilic condition is reciprocal togetherness – this is largely what Mbembe appeals for at the end of *Critique of Black Reason*.[79] And yet, this is not

[78] HC: 180.
[79] CBR: 178-183.

a condition that once met redeems the fragmented existence that is life under exile. Rather, it is a perpetual state of being that insists upon a turn towards the unknown. Recalling the state of inclination from Cavarero's reflections on the conditions of being born, the condition of maintaining a dwelling place in earth-world-history is that of unknown togetherness.[80] Benjamin describes a similar scene when he reflects upon the possibility of redemption in the progression of uninterrupted catastrophe. Indeed, his claim is that 'redemption depends on the tiny fissure in the continuous catastrophe.'[81] It is my contention that the opacity of Climate X, its resistance to a discourse of instrumentality or precedence, is such a fissure.

The claim that the disclosure of earth-world-history from concealment parallels the disclosure of the 'who' may yet be underdeveloped here. However, the point is not without prior argumentation. Arendt herself pursued a similar line in *The Human Condition*. In a section entitled, 'The Web of Relations and the Enacted Stories' she contrasts the physical world of things with the intangible web of human relations. Although the two are materially distinct, the porous overlapping through which each yields meaning suggests something about the depth of placedness irreducible to mere physicality. In the text she writes:

> […] the physical, worldy in-between along with its interests is overlaid and, as it were, overgrown with an altogether different in-between which consists of deeds and words and owes its origin exclusively to men's acting and speaking directly to one another.[82]

Although Arendt attributes an element of the wild to the interweaving of place and action, creating a sense of the untamed force of action, it is worth recalling that for Arendt actions are always fragile and in need of preservation. The integrity of the *polis* can be laid to waste if action is not nurtured and the fabric of plurality falls apart.[83] And so, even when she discusses the irreducibility of the 'who,' she is careful to insist upon the reciprocity by which it appears. Indeed, she goes so far as to entitle the

[80] ICR.
[81] SW4, 185.
[82] HC: 182-3.
[83] See HC: 199-203.

next section of *The Human Condition* 'The Frailty of Human Affairs.' Here she records that action 'is never possible in isolation; to be isolated is to be deprived of the capacity to act.' Once again mixing notions of place and action, she goes on to write that 'action and speech need the surrounding presence of others no less than fabrication needs the surrounding presence of nature for its material, and of a world in which to place the finished product. Fabrication is surrounded by and in constant contact with the world: action and speech are surrounded by and in constant contact with the web of the acts and words of other men.'[84]

These porous accounts of the way in which place and action are made meaningful assume a depth beyond that of merely overlapping metaphors. The spatial account that Arendt gives of action and the way in which space assumes meaning through the web of human relation reinforce the complexity of earth-world-history from earlier chapters whilst incorporating the exilic dimension of the *Future* in which fractured relations coincide with the breakdown of place. At the end of the essay 'Introduction *into* Politics' when Arendt discusses the worldlessness of the modern world, she considers this intersection of place and relationality. In words that seemingly anticipate the current climate crisis and the speculative images of Future-Atropos she writes that 'the withering away of everything *between* us, can also be described as the spread of the desert.'[85] The desertification of the world that Arendt describes as coeval with a form of worldlessness recalls the earlier discussion of Mbembe's becoming Black of the world and the normalization of the exilic condition. Indeed, she goes onto name the experience of acute suffering in a desert-world as occurring because 'we are still human and still intact; the danger lies in becoming true inhabitants of the desert and feeling at home in it.'[86] It is precisely this danger that Future-Atropos names; the danger of resigning oneself to the movement of time. Well aware of the dangers such a resignation would bring into being, Arendt suggests a countermeasure in the 'oases' that exist in love and friendship, without which we 'would not know how to breathe.'[87] Although her discussion is fleeting and not as established as her reflections on the miracle of beginning and natality, the redemptive force she ascribes to 'life-giving'

[84] HC: 188.
[85] PP: 201.
[86] Ibid.
[87] PP: 202.

resource of love is one worth pursuing. And so, while she does little to develop a praxis of love, it is the consistency with which references to love appear in her reflections on the decline of modern politics that, in spite of its apparent 'antipolitical' core, suggest at an alternative meaning. Without rejecting Arendt's suspicion of love's potential to foreclose the world then, I want to explore the aporetic possibility of love's worldly potential, one which she describes elsewhere as 'life-giving.'[88]

6.4 *Amor Mundi* in/of Crisis

The theme of love in Arendt's writing strikes her readers as one of profound antagonism. Her infamous condemnation of love as 'perhaps the most powerful of all antipolitical human forces' in *The Human Condition* contrasts sharply with claims made in the same work that 'out of a love for the body politic' the public realm of plurality is preserved.[89] Arendt's sustained interest in themes of love and *amor mundi,* or love of the world demonstrate that in spite of the apparent conviction with which Arendt makes this point, love cannot be simply reduced to its apolitical status. Indeed, if the prevailing focus on Arendt and love remains bound to this one instance what is forsaken is the chance to engage a topic that remained a central provocation for Arendt. Rather than accept Arendt's position in *The Human Condition,* and even here acceptance would mean overlooking those further occasions in that same text that complicate and even contradict this equation of love and the apolitical, in this section I firstly want to clarify the position of love in Arendt's writing before moving to situate it within the context of dwelling on earth-world-history.

Arendt's inquiry into love begins with her 1929 doctoral dissertation on the topic of love and Saint Augustine. In contrast to her later references to love, which move seamlessly between the condemnatory remarks on love in *The Human Condition,* to love as responsibility to the oblique and ill-defined '*amor mundi,'* in the dissertation her work is bound up with the attempt to classify love.[90] Hinging between a discussion of *caritas* and *cupiditas,* which she respectively understands in terms of 'good' and 'bad' love, the dissertation develops two general theories of love that inform her later

[88] PP: 203.
[89] HC: 242; 41.
[90] See, HC: 242; BPF: 193; LSA.

reflections. Framed in the context of the thesis in terms of their object of desire, the 'goodness' of *caritas* and the 'badness' of *cupiditas,* arise in connection to the worldliness of the object in question. For instance, in *cupiditas* the lover is continually disappointed in their craving, having bound themselves to the impermanence of the perishable world. Yet insofar as *cupiditas* clings to the world, at the same time it constitutes the world, opening up a paradoxical space that must be transcended via *caritas.* By contrast 'in *caritas,* whose object is eternity, man transforms himself into an eternal, nonperishable being.'[91] Arendt locates the strife of these two loves in the fact that while they share a common origin in craving desire, *cupiditas* can never achieve the object of its desire, while *caritas* draws the lover towards a complex and transcendent world. The categorisation of 'good' and 'bad' thus becomes more acute when read in terms of its temporality; the former is limited by its perishability while the latter invests in something transcendent – or in a language more appropriate to this project, something intergenerational. Continuing the blurring of time and space around which the earth-world-history constellation is coordinated, Arendt makes a further spatial distinction between good and bad loves; namely, love is bad – and becomes in the context of *The Human Condition* – antipolitical because it collapses the in-between space necessary to the agonism of the world.

In the dissertation the unworldliness of *cupiditas* is connected to its finitude. Where the subject of *caritas* is reassured in their investment in eternity and the absolute future, in *cupiditas* the lover is overwhelmed by craving desire for possession and thwarted by their own mortality. Hence, 'mortal man, who has been placed into the world…and must leave it, instead clings to it and in the process turns the world itself into a vanishing one, that is, one due to vanish with his death.'[92] It is this unworldliness that reappears in *The Human Condition*: 'love, by reason of its passion, destroys the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others.'[93] Quite another account of love's worldliness is visible in Arendt's references to *amor mundi,* which arises as an investment in precisely the fragility and incomplete of that in-between space. The trope of *caritas* then, that it aligns with the individual's desire 'to belong to something outside himself,' is transformed into *amor mundi* and

[91] LSA: 18.
[92] LSA: 17.
[93] HC: 242.

becomes the loving and worldly investment in the body politic of human plurality.[94] Rather than destroy the in-between, here love serves as an affirmation of that mutable ground. Poised as an apparent inversion of one another then, the bad and good tropes of love reappear insofar as they either destroy or reaffirm the fabric that knits community together.

In a letter to Karl Jaspers in 1955 as she was preparing what would become *The Human Condition,* Arendt revealed her plan to name the text '*Amor Mundi.'* And yet, while she references love in passing in the text, the actual notion of *amor mundi* does not appear, leaving the question open as to what *amor mundi,* which she describes straightforwardly in the letter to Jaspers as 'love for the world,' actually amounts.[95] Indeed, the full reference to *amor mundi* in the letter draws us further still from the antipolitical and unworldly condemnation of love that does actually appear in the book. Invoking the critical definition of understanding that she described in the 1954 essay 'Understanding and Politics' as the 'unending activity by which, in constant change and variation, we come to terms with and reconcile ourselves to reality, that is, try to be at home in the world,' she writes one year later in the letter: 'I've begun so late, really only in recent years, to truly love the world…Out of gratitude, I want to call my book on political theory "*Amor Mundi.*"'[96] Again, without drawing too much from these remarks, a clear distance can be perceived between the possessive love of worldly things and a love born of gratitude for and investment in the world.

This latter mode of loving is actually invoked in the dissertation on Augustine as the 'lust of the eyes' which 'desire to know the things of the world for their own sake.'[97] Confusing the metaphorical basis from which she thinks this experience of love, Arendt describes the lust of the eyes as a 'non-sensual love for the world' in which the self is forgotten, and the world seen as a quest for knowledge.[98] And yet, her invocation of the eyes challenges her aesthetic negation and calls on her reader to seek meaning in this paradoxical account. To see the world is to be in the world. In much the same way, to love the world is to love from a place of being in the world. The necessary limitations of

[94] LSA: 18.
[95] Arendt and Jaspers, 1992: 264.
[96] EU: 308; ibid**.**
[97] LSA: 23.
[98] LSA: 24.

these positions, of seeing and loving from only one position, which while they can be nomadic or insist upon something like the contrapuntal reality of Said's exilic subject, is that they are always already *in place*.[99]

Connections to the placedness of love attain a greater prominence in Arendt's reference to love at the end of her essay, 'Crisis in Education,' indeed it this reference that I argue is her most apposite definition of *amor mundi* and one that lends itself to developing a praxis of love as dwelling in the exilic earth-world-history of the climate crisis. In the closing remarks to an essay that has already drawn on the placedness of being, opening with the claim that 'the essence of education is natality, the fact that human beings are *born* into the world,' Arendt recalls the images of reconciliation and gratitude that accompanied her earlier remarks in 'Understanding and Politics' and her letter to Jaspers. Here she writes:

> Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to take responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from out world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands the chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world.[100]

Invoking responsibility, love, and place, and echoing her earlier appeals to come to terms with the world and create it as a space of dwelling for others, Arendt's account of education serves as a critical point of departure for thinking the exilic conditions of the climate crisis.

The *amor mundi* to which Arendt alludes at the end of 'The Crisis in Education' can be read as an extrapolation of Heidegger's remarks on love in *What is Called Thinking*? published six years earlier. While I don't anticipate Arendt to have necessarily framed her conclusion as a response to Heidegger,

[99] Said, 2000: 191.
[100] BPF: 193.

the way in which his thinking permeates her own and her declaration of *What is Called Thinking?* as 'perhaps the most exciting of his books' distinguish it as a rich source for her own work.[101] Read together then, an understanding of love as meaning-making, namely as a praxis of meaningful unconcealment in earth-world-history becomes apparent. Heidegger's reference to love is only fleeting, drawn from a Hölderlin poem to clarify his inquiry into the meaning of thinking, yet the implication of the placedness of being is clear. He cites two stanzas from Hölderlin, which form an exchange between Socrates and Alcibiades on the relation between thinking and place. Invoking such Arendtian themes as natality, responsibility, and understanding, the Hölderlin poem anticipates much of what emerges in Arendt's writing on *amor mundi.*

Socrates and Alcibiades

Why, holy Socrates, must you always adore
This young man? Is there nothing greater than he?
Why do you look on him
Lovingly, as on a god?

Who the deepest has thought, loves what is most alive,
Who has looked at the world, understands youth at its
Height,
And wise men in the end
Often incline to beauty.[102]

The connection between thinking and love is rendered even more explicit in Heidegger's commentary on the poem. Conceding that it admits a 'curious rationalism,' Heidegger nevertheless claims that 'what the line [who has deepest thought, loves what is most alive] tells us we can fathom only when

[101] WCT: back cover.
[102] As referenced in WCT, 20.

we are capable of thinking.'[103] In other words, it is only when capable of thinking that love, not simply in a possessive sense, but as a means of understanding what is most alive in the world can be experienced. It is precisely this point that Arendt makes in 'The Crisis in Education.'

To love what is most alive is a provocative statement, not least in the context of the climate crisis, an epoch in which finitude and decay – glacier melt, desertification, ocean acidification, mass extinctions and mass migrations – predominate. Returning to Arendt however, what is 'most alive' is the fulfilment of being, namely, the realisation of natality, the faculty in which novelty and potential find their grounding. This spirit of anarchic messianism is felt in Heidegger's writing as the authenticity of being. What is most alive in a Heideggerian sense is precisely that mode of being that *Dasein,* in the act of dwelling and yielding meaning from the placedness (the *Da* of *Dasein*), exemplifies. In both these instances what thus emerges as the 'object' of love is the objectlessness of moving from concealment towards unconcealment. To love is to engage in the task of thinking that Arendt describes as simultaneously in withdrawal from and in the presence of the world.[104] For Heidegger, whose entire essay explores what it is to think, the synergy between love and thinking arises in the shared investment in affirming – through processes of critical unconcealment – what is. Indeed, it is Heidegger's reference to Saint Augustine in one of his letters to Arendt that encapsulates this disclosive and worldly dimension of love while at the same time realising this complex of thinking. The maxim '*amo: volo ut sis'* attributed to Augustine by Heidegger in a letter dating from 1925 would become a pivotal idea in Arendt's writing, one that captures what it is to love earth-world-history as a locus of agonistic dwelling and, perhaps moreover, one that accords with a praxis of love as *future*-making.

The phrase is first introduced in Arendt's writing in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* where she proposes it as the dialectical inverse of what occurs under totalitarianism as the other is reduced to instrumental value. Already the resonance with the brute instrumentalism of the *Future,* in particular Future-Lachesis can be felt:

[103] WCT: 21.
[104] LMT: 74-78; 92-97.

> This mere existence, that is, all that which is mysteriously given to us at birth and which includes the shape of our bodies and the talents of our minds, can be adequately dealt with only by the unpredictable hazards of friendship and sympathy, or by the great and incalculable grace of love, which says with Augustine, '*Volo ut sis'* (I want you to be), without being able to give any particular reason for such supreme and unsurpassable affirmation.[105]

This pure affirmation of the other, unreasoned and unconnected to their 'whatness,' the qualities that Arendt described as the 'gifts, talents, and shortcomings' of individual, equate loving someone with the attempt to – borrowing from Heidegger's vocabulary – 'unconceal' their hidden 'whoness.' It is this investment in the sense-making of another that recalls Heidegger's citation of Hölderlin: 'who has deepest thought, loves what is most alive.' While it is this privileging of 'whoness' that Arendt argues presages the 'antipolitical' dimension of love, which 'because it is unconcerned to the point of total unworldliness with what the loved person may be…destroys the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others,' I suggest that something else entirely transpires when the object of love is the condition of being-in-place.[106] Here love exists in spite of the reductive 'what' qualities that impose instrumental ends on being and becomes a way in which to imagine the world otherwise. This argument plays out in Arendt's claim that 'out of love for a body politic' the public realm of the *polis* is sustained.[107]

Accepting love as the cohesive force that binds together the political realm, which in the properly Arendtian sense is distinct from the instrumental realm that Future-Lachesis embodies, presents a direct challenge to the various exilic tendencies of the *Future.* In the meaningful overlap between the exilic condition and worldlessness, love as *amor mundi* or love of earth-world-history provides a productive alternative; insofar as this love is directed towards the agonistic and irreducible quality of dwelling, it cannot be confined by the limits of exile. When Arendt thus writes that

[105] OT: 301.
[106] HC: 242.
[107] HC: 41.

'worldlessness as a political phenomenon is possible only on the assumption that the world will not last,' she describes a state of affairs in which the object of love in *amor mundi* has been lost.[108] To love the world, a task that Arendt concedes as difficult, involves willed reconciliation with the events that undermine, challenge, and threaten precisely that love. It is only in this courageous embrace of the world, an act that echoes Adriana Cavarero's celebration of inclination as the exposure of the self, that Arendt's body politic retains meaning. To persevere in acts of dwelling that refuse to be made reducible to those events is the realisation of love itself. Moreover, to love the world in this way is not to dwell for the sake of love but in the very name of love. Arendt makes this distinction when she cautions against the perversion of love as itself a facet of instrumentality. And so, it is not her claim that 'love can only become false and perverted when it is used for political purposes such as the change of salvation of the world,' that I contest.[109] The account of love that I am outlining here is one that is realisable not as a means towards end, but as an end itself. It is for this reason that I find a praxis of love in the sustained activity of dwelling in earth-world-history.

The refusal to subsume love either under the 'what' like qualities of the exilic condition, namely its instrumental imposition on politics, nor as its perversion of life into a means-end calculation, gives rise to an understanding of love as *future*-making. This temporal inflection of love is generated as love is refracted through the constellation earth-world-history, in which meaning necessarily assumes a temporal dimension as its unconcealment is woven into history. This forward propulsion of love thus becomes a latent rebuff to the nostalgic laments that refuse to acknowledge the presence and present conditioning of the climate crisis. Directed towards the future both as a temporality and as the evolved continuation of earth-world-history, to dwell in a praxis of love is to realise Arendt's injunction on being in the world after the un-earthly events of totalitarianism: to take life as the 'unending activity by which, in constant change and variation, we come to terms with and reconcile ourselves to reality, that is, try to be at home in the world.'[110]

[108] HC: 54.
[109] HC: 52.
[110] EU: 308.

As Arendt writes in 'The Crisis in Culture,' 'to dwell…indicates an attitude of loving care and stands in sharp contrast to all efforts to subject nature to the dominion of man.'[111] Already anticipating the violence of humans against nature and their claim to dominion, Arendt sees in dwelling both the depth of love that will find meaning in the place of being and a challenge to such violence. It is here that love as a life-giving resource becomes apparent. Not only is dwelling a praxis of love, but love is itself the source that gives weight to dwelling. In contrast to the violence of desertification with which Arendt dealt specifically and the desertification that is the exilic condition today, love acts as a 'life-giving oasis' that replenishes the world. And so, against what Arendt describes as the specific threat of becoming accustomed to desert life, a danger that is reimagined here as the normalisation of the exilic condition and the realisation of the world's becoming Black, is precisely this oasis. Reflecting on the condition of modern politics, I want to suggest that Arendt's introduction of love be read as anticipating what is lacking in our own eroded sense of politics today. Against the dangers of the *Future* and the political institutions that bow to their appearance, I invoke her appeal to the life-giving oasis that is love. As she writes in the epilogue to her essay on the meaning of politics:

> What went wrong is politics, our plural existence, and not what we can do and create insofar as we exist in the singular: in the isolation of the artist, in the solitude of the philosopher, in the inherently worldless relationship between human beings as it exists in love and sometimes in friendship – when one heart reaches out directly to the other, as in friendship, or when the in-between, the world, goes up in flames, as in love. Without with intactness of these oases we would not know how to breathe, and political scientists should now this.[112]

In an apparent echoing of Arendt's words and enjoining the constellation of earth-world-history, Mbembe similarly concludes *Critique of Black Reason* on a cautionary yet hopeful claim:

[111] BPF: 208.
[112] PP: 202.

> The world will not survive unless humanity devotes itself to the task of sustaining what can be called the *reservoirs of life.* The refusal to perish may yet turn us into historical beings and make it possible for the world to be a world. But our vocation to survive depends on making the desire for life the cornerstone of a new way of thinking about politics and culture.[113]

To dwell in the security of love, a security of incomplete and concealed forms, makes possible the world. Or, as Mbembe writes, to love makes possible the realisation of history, in this way, to love is to be at home in earth-world-history.

[113] CBR: 181.

Conclusion

When Hannah Arendt began her final work on the threefold faculties of the mind – thinking, willing, and judging – she returned to two key figures in her life.[1] The first was Heidegger, her teacher at Marburg and one of the key influences in the development of her philosophical and political thinking.[2] As she began the book, it was to Heidegger's reflections on thinking that Arendt turned, affirming his provocation that thinking serves to produce neither knowledge, wisdom, resolutions to the universe nor to 'endow us directly with the power to act' as an epigraph to her own work on thinking.[3] Heidegger's investment in exposing the limits of thought in order to ignite the question of what it means to think assumes particular prescience in relation to the failure of thinking of the second figure Arendt cites Adolf Eichmann. Eichmann, the former Nazi official on whose trial she had reported in 1961, provided Arendt with an exemplar of thoughtlessness. Witness to his apparent refusal to think, Arendt's attendance at the trial led her to coin the phrase 'banality of evil,' the polemical formulation that spoke to the potential ordinariness of those who commit evil.[4]

Taking seriously what she saw as the complete absence of thinking in Eichmann's testimony, Arendt was prompted to ask whether thinking might 'make men abstain from evil-doing and even actually "condition" them against it?'[5] Rather than forsake Heidegger's earlier hesitation about the potential of thought and elevate thought to a superior status in the canon of ethics or morality, Arendt's position evinces a similar hesitancy to position thinking in the realm of immanent wisdom or knowledge. And yet, where thinking cannot become a source of pure goodness, it can challenge the limits of what appears in such a way that it inclines towards what is not yet, what is not known, and what is not fixed. Viewed at this level thinking dwells in the domain of worldly unconcealment.

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[1] Arendt only finished the first two sections of the book before she passed away. And though the second section on 'Willing' is fully written when she passed, Arendt had not revised much of its contents. What was to be written in the final section on 'Judgement,' can never be fully known although the lecture course that she gave on Kant's political philosophy and published in 1982 is said to contain many of her ideas.
[2] Chapter One went some way to addressing the Heideggerian elements of Arendt's writing, at the very least in their shared concern for the place of being. For a more sustained discussion on the way in which Heidegger's ontology informed Arendt's onto-politics see Villa, 1996: 113-143.
[3] LMT: 2.
[4] EJ.
[5] LMT: 5.

In spite of this affinity between thinking and the pursuit of unconcealment, it was not to thinking that I turned in the previous chapter as a potential antidote to the evilness that inheres in the exilic violence of the climate crisis's *History* and *Future.* Indeed, it was not even evil that I located in these spaces nor was it the practice of evil that I detected in the willed ignorance that supports those structures that underpin both exilic history and the more general exilic condition of the climate crisis. While evil undoubtedly has a role to play in the ordinariness of this violence, in its unfolding as the catastrophic 'status quo' of normativity and *History's* unremitting progression, my concern has not been to locate evilness within the climate crisis but to challenge the very structure that precedes the division of subjects into oppressor and oppressed.[6] Returning to Heidegger's reflections on thinking then, my concern here is not with the absence of thinking – the same absence that Arendt saw in the ordinary evilness of Eichmann – but with that which provokes thinking in the first place and, it might be added, that from which thinking, in times of willed ignorance, turns away.

Heidegger developed this nuance between what it is to think and the object of thought in his first lecture of *What is Called Thinking?* Complicating the qualification of the human status as determined by the capacity to think, he begins the lecture as follows:

> Man can think in the sense that he possesses the possibility to do so. This possibility alone, however, is no guarantee to us that we are capable of thinking. For we are capable of doing only what we are inclined to do. And again, we truly incline only toward something that in turn inclines toward us, toward our essential being, by appealing to our essential being as the keeper who holds us in our essential being.[7]

Establishing an affinity between thought and its object, Heidegger is careful to resist reducing the latter to an object of pure or immanent consumption. Insofar as thinking is provoked, it remains bound to its object as a source of agonism rather than total disclosure. The valence of Adriana Cavarero's account of inclination re-emerges here as the force that exposes the intersection and dependence of

[6] Here I am alluding to Benjamin's description of historical catastrophe as the status quo, see SW4: 184-5.
[7] WCT: 3.

the self on all that exceeds it, denying subject sovereignty as it inclines subjectivity towards a state of being that is always already and always will be marked by an irreducible relationality. In much the same way, Heidegger appeals towards an account of thinking that depends upon the resistance of ontology to immanence, the refusal to subsume thinking to knowledge and thought to its completion. And yet, what appears in this rejection of totalization is the threat posed to thinking by something like the exilic condition. Which is not to say that exile coincides with the loss of thinking, but that the normalization of exile is, understood in terms borrowed from Heidegger, the refusal to incline towards that space in which being appears. The loss of one's claim to place, which appears in Arendtian terms as the inability to realise the potential of natality to be-in-place then coincides with the loss of thinking as an activity proper to the agonistic and thought-provoking constellation that is earth-world-history. Under the normalised conditions of exile, a normalisation that Arendt and Benjamin describe as catastrophic, the loss of thought as the inclination towards the concealed conditions of place coincides with the loss of something like humanity's essential being.[8]

For Arendt the status of thinking is somewhat different. While she holds onto Heidegger's original provocation that thinking cannot be placed within a means-end framework of producing knowledge or wisdom, she nevertheless claims that 'we must be able to "demand" [thought's] exercise from every sane person, no matter how erudite or ignorant, intelligent or stupid, he may happen to be.'[9] Indeed, if Heidegger were to insist on the capacity of each individual to assume the charge of being authentically, that is, to take up the position of *Dasein,* then he too would presumably share this demand. And yet, it is not thinking that I want to demand of each individual burdened with the task of witnessing the climate crisis, rather it is love. It was love that I enjoined in the previous chapter as a *praxis* of dwelling in earth-world-history, capable of recalling the Heideggerian strife first located in that constellation in Chapter One and later clarified through the futurity of natality to remake the world and give rise to messianic beginnings. Where thinking appears in Arendt's writing in the context of justice, neither as the logic proscribing the violence of the law nor as handmaiden to

[8] For Arendt a crisis becomes a disaster when thought has atrophied and the integrity of reality forfeited, see PP: 171. For Benjamin's discussion of historical catastrophe see SW4: 184-5.
[9] LMT: 13.

the punitive force of retribution but as the pursuit of something transcendent of ends, it is love that serves as its underlying motivation. Indeed, Arendt writes in *The Promise of Politics* that 'the motive for assuming the burden of earthly politics' – a politics that has been shown to coincide with the right to be-in-place and the law of earthly plurality – 'is love of one's neighbour, not fear of him.'[10] It is in this same text that Arendt identifies love as the 'life-giving source' that fuels life – even in the desert-like conditions of exile.[11] Rather than espouse a politics of thinking as distinct from love then, my aim in this conclusion is to demonstrate the political potential of love: firstly as an impetus to think and secondly to act.

If love provides the basis on which the meaning of earth-world-history is sought, then it is love that must be demanded of each individual. It is love, before its transformation in the activity of thinking that gives meaning to the search for worldly meaning. Martin Hägglund describes love as 'sense-making' in precisely this way.[12] Distinguishing love from its possessive ends, a misappropriation that resembles the equation of thinking with knowledge, Hägglund espouses an account of love that overlaps not only with Arendt and Heidegger but with all who appeal for a world of love not as a challenge to hatred and violence but as an original way of being in the world.[13] Arendt dismissed the perversion of love into a means-end construct when she wrote that 'love can only become false and perverted when it is used for political purposes such as the change of salvation of the world.'[14] And yet, as I demonstrated in Chapter Six, love is not a mode of instrumental action but an affirmation of that which resists immanence as the as-yet concealed agonism of earth-world-history itself. As a *praxis* of worldly being then, I want to contest the quarrel between James Baldwin and Arendt on the status of love, arguing that Baldwin's description of love as a 'state of being…in the tough and universal sense of quest and daring and growth' in fact coincides with Arendt's description of love as a life-giving oasis that give meaning to the project of worldliness.[15] Rather than

[10] PP: 139.
[11] PP: 203.
[12] Hägglund, 2019.
[13] I particularly think of Baldwin's appeal to love in *The Fire Next Time Here,* see Baldwin, 1963.
[14] HC: 52.
[15] Baldwin, 1963: 103.

introduce a new claim, what I aim to show here recalls the arguments advanced throughout this project and highlights their common goal in realising the condition of placedness.

And so, where I want to begin is with a return to the original discussion of the earth-world-history constellation from Part I. What figured initially as a complication of Heidegger's discussion on the origin of the artwork evolved into a concise reflection on the movement between earth, world, and history, those three spaces that coalesced to form the constellation earth-world-history.[16] Brought into productive proximity with one another, my original aim was to show a common affinity between the status of art and the earth. Namely, that whilst each lays claim to an ontological primordiality as the object which gives meaning to artwork and artists on the one hand, and world and history on the other, this primacy is ultimately untenable. What I drew out through Heidegger's discussion of the origin of art was precisely the impossibility of ascribing its ontological primacy, assumed greater clarity still in Heidegger's discussion of the fourfold [*das Geviert*]. The development of 'strife' central to the fourfold which exists in the interplay of earth, sky, mortal, and divinities made patent the inextricability of being from a plurality of relational forces.

If artwork and the artists are neither prerequisite nor subsequent to the notion of art, what the fourfold made apparent was similar force of this 'co-being' of conditions that coordinate meaning inherent to the fact of being-in-place. What it meant to 'dwell' within this agonal sphere of the fourfold thus arose insofar as 'dwelling [preserved] the fourfold by bringing the presencing of the fourfold into things.'[17] This understanding of space as suspended between the move away from immanent unconcealment towards concealment can now be understood as precisely that irreducible or unfixable origin that figures both as the locus of dwelling and as the objectless object proper to love. This force of love to affirm without totalising the space of dwelling is illuminated by Arendt's own discussion of place as exerting a conditioning – though not reductive – force over being.

I began my discussion of the role of place in Arendt's writing by noting the reappearance of an organising agonism or strife around which notions of earth, world, and history each appear. While for Heidegger the central problematic here was the status of an original and organising origin, for

[16] PLT: 17.
[17] PLT: 149.

Arendt elements of the agonistic arise in the necessary meeting of opposites. What thus appears in her writings as the central political condition of plurality is defined as the initially paradoxical fact that 'we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live.'[18] Yet it is plurality's inextricability from the earth, a connection that she captures in the claim that 'plurality is the law of the earth' paired simultaneously with the fact plurality appears in the disclosure of worlds and hence the production of history that reveals the agonism with which earth, world, and history appear in the context of her work.[19] If the detection of something like earth-world-history in Heidegger's writing thus played on the impossibility of reducing ontology to a series of causative beginnings, and hence a form of ontological linearity, the reappearance of earth-world-history in Arendt's writing assumes a far more political quality as the locus of political action. As such, it is the emergence of plurality – and with it the second political condition of natality – in the context earth-world-history that advances Heidegger's discussion of place into a far more political realm.

This transformation of what it means to engage the placedness of being as the condition for Heideggerian dwelling into a discussion of Arendtian politics as such allows for a renewed discussion about the intersection of politics and place. The original contours of this connection between place and politics are discernible in Arendt's maxim that 'plurality is the law of the earth' and hence the need to think politics as bound in some way to the earth. Yet the meaning of this connection becomes more concise insofar as what is recognised in the connection between the earth and politics is something like the impossibility of 'completing' politics or identifying a single political end. What the inextricability of politics from the law of the earth makes clear is that the political institution cannot instrumentalise action without losing something inherent to the condition for politics itself. The discussion in Part II about the intersection of natality, Arendt's second political condition, and earth-world-history established a paradigm in which the anti-political force of the exilic condition could be made apparent. While this argument hinged in Chapter Three on recovering the 'earthliness' of natality, an exegesis that paralleled Adriana Cavarero's recovery of the maternal dimension of

[18] HC: 8.
[19] LMT: 19.

natality, it went on to progress a reading of Arendt's account of rights in connection to earth-world-history.[20] Invoking the agonism with which earth-world-history first emerged out of Heidegger's writing on the origin, the connection between the 'fore-right' that structurally proceeds the logic of rights with the right-to-placedness, the redemption of natality's earthliness established the inextricable connection between rights and place. Each disclosed via the affirmative realisation of natality in action, the right-to-placedness created space in which to think the historical redemption of previous transgressions against rights in Chapter Four. Attaining to a messianic understanding of natality, here my project returned to the anachronistic appearance of earth-world-history which rejects the primacy of an origin, a resistance that was elaborated via a reading of Walter Benjamin's political theology.

Benjamin's political theology provided a rich point of entry into thinking the revolutionary potential of natality to reorient earth-world-history and challenge the limited frames of reference that threaten to govern its appearance. Similarly refusing to totalise either origin or ending, political theology functioned as a methodological apparatus that would guide the realisation of natality towards the renewed unconcealment of earth-world-history. Allowing for both the messianic redemption of earth-world-history as inhering in actions that act 'into' history and renew the past, filling it with what Benjamin calls *Jetztzeit* and for the original spontaneity of natality which inaugurates new and unpredictable beginnings, I developed a reading of natality that would allow for the realisation of that preeminent right-to-placedness.[21] Effectively 'operationalising' what emerged in dialogue with Benjamin as a form of messianic or revolutionary historiography, in Part III I dealt directly with the violence of history, identified in Chapter Five as the exilic violence of *History.* Complicating the status of history, *History* was introduced to identify precisely those forms that restrict the unconcealment of earth-world-history and impose oppressive ends over those claims to place that are so central to natality, plurality and the realisation of politics more generally. Locating the specific origins of *History* as it pertains to the climate crisis, I argued for the twofold recognition of this exilic violence in the histories of settler-colonialism and racialised capitalism. Seeing within these moments the conditions inaugural to the climate crisis and naming them created space in which to think an

[20] see ICR.
[21] SW4, 395.

alternate history, one that I named *history,* its diminutive form testament to it openness to be reread and ultimately reoriented.

While the revolutionary potential of *history* appeared principally in the form of decolonial struggles to recognise the histories of the oppressed, in Chapter Six I encountered the further exilic space of *Future.* Extending the exilic violence of *History, Future* negates the radical politics that first emerged in Benjamin's critical historiography of political theology, manifesting instead the ineliminable necessity to engage the irreversible facticity of the climate crisis. Drawing out the distinct nuances of this violence in a threefold reading of *Future* as Future-Clotho, Future-Lachesis, and Future-Atropos, it was this totalising claim to earth-world-history that ultimately led to an appeal to engage love as a *praxis* of revolutionary future-making. At this juncture, the *Future* was thus counterposed through a narrative of affirmative world-making, of recognising the ineliminable aegis of the climate crisis – what I described in terms of the 'what' qualities of earth-world-history – and nevertheless remaining invested in the concealed 'whoness' of an open *future.* Whilst simplistic, this division of earth-world-history into the metaphorical spheres of 'what' and 'who,' allows me to address here the intersection of thinking and love as it first arose in this conclusion.

Part of Arendt's discussion of thinking hinges on its appearance within a similar triadic construction, which like earth-world-history 'cannot be derived from each other and though they have certain common characteristics they cannot be reduced to a common denominator.'[22] Here thinking is cast alongside willing and judging; what can thus be said to motivate thought to think, the will to will and judgment to judge by necessity invokes the others. In the same way then, that the 'oneness' of Heidegger's fourfold appears in each instance of dwelling or the 'oneness' of earth-world-history in the realisation of natality, the oneness of the mental faculties depends 'on a certain stillness of the soul's passion, on that "dispassionate quiet" (*leidenschaftslose Stille*) which Hegel ascribed to "merely thinking cognition."'[23] In further contrast to her polemical remarks on the antipolitical force

[22] LMT: 69.
[23] LMT: 70.

of love, it is love that Arendt identifies as the 'weight of the soul' stilling its passions and allowing the mental activities to come together and disclose the world anew.[24]

Restricted neither to the specificity of the lover nor the beloved, Arendt identifies love as irreducible to objecthood; rather her concern is with love as love itself, the 'footprint' of experience.[25] Unbounded by either objective end or subjective origin, it is this love that stills the passions of the soul and brings world into being anew, whether through the reframing of the present through memory or the expression of judgment. Disclosed neither in the pursuit of ends nor as the rough extraction of possession, love allows the world to come into being as a space of appearance. What is transformed in love thus pertains to the world itself, insofar as the world brings together all those who live within it and remain touched by something that exists outside of them, untenable and yet forever within a semblance of reach. To love the world is not to love the world as a locus of not-yet or no-longer but as it is. As Arendt writes, 'there is no greater assertion of something or somebody than to love it, that is, to say: I will that you be – *Amo: vol out sis.*'[26] With this turning around from love as evidence of the passions to love as the willing affirmation of what is, a clarification can be made once again as regarding what it means to love the world. Namely, neither to love blindly nor in nostalgia but open to something that cannot be known except in its concealment. To love the world as it is exposed under the violence of the climate crisis is to stand in fear and trembling and recognise that what guides meaning and what appeals to justice is never simply ready to hand but fractured, concealed and awaiting unconcealment.[27]

If this project began with the aim of thinking the status of the climate crisis and the potential to read within Arendt an environmental politics, it ends by concluding that insofar as Arendt is a theorist of place, she is an environmental thinker. Arendt's writing is thus not simply applicable to this crisis, it was always already implicated in the questions to which the crisis gives rise. At the outset Arendt's politics are a politics of the earth, her 'central political category' a provocation regarding the earthly placedness of humans, and her project of maintaining a love for the body politic

[24] LMW: 95.
[25] LMW: 103.
[26] LMW: 104.
[27] Here I invoke Arendt's response to the world after the violence of totalitarianism, see EU: 132.

an attempt to instil a love for the world – an *amor mundi* – that will persist in spite of the persistent concealment of that place. The imperative that first emerged in *The Human Condition*, to think what we are doing, thus re-emerges with even greater clarity here. Not only to think what we are doing in an age of planetary instability and ongoing transgressions of the natal right-to-placedness but, insofar as to think is to love, to persist in loving the unknowable place of the human condition: earth-world-history.

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